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CHIEFLY OF PEASANT LIFE
BEATRIX L. TOLLEMACHE

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RUSSIAN SKETCHES

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RUSSIAN SKETCHES

CHIEFLY OF PEASANT LIFE

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

BEATRIX L. TOLLEMACHE

(HON. MRS. LIONEL TOLLEMACHE)

LONDON

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PREFACE

NO Russian who loves the literature of his country can hear that one or other of its masterpieces has been translated into German, or French, or English without mingled feelings of pleasure and anxiety—pleasure that the treasures of that literature should be opened to a foreign nation, anxiety lest they should be presented to it in a dress unworthy of their beauties; for how difficult it is to render into any language, whether of Latin or Teutonic origin, the power, the pathos, the striking illustrations, the quaint humour, above all the delicate lights and shades which give the Russian literature its unique charm.

I have lived ten years in England, and in those ten years have only come across two persons capable of feeling, grasping, and interpreting that charm. One of the two is the translator of this volume. Mrs. Tollemache's success is the more wonderful because the stories and poems she has chosen to translate deal chiefly with country life, and have the full

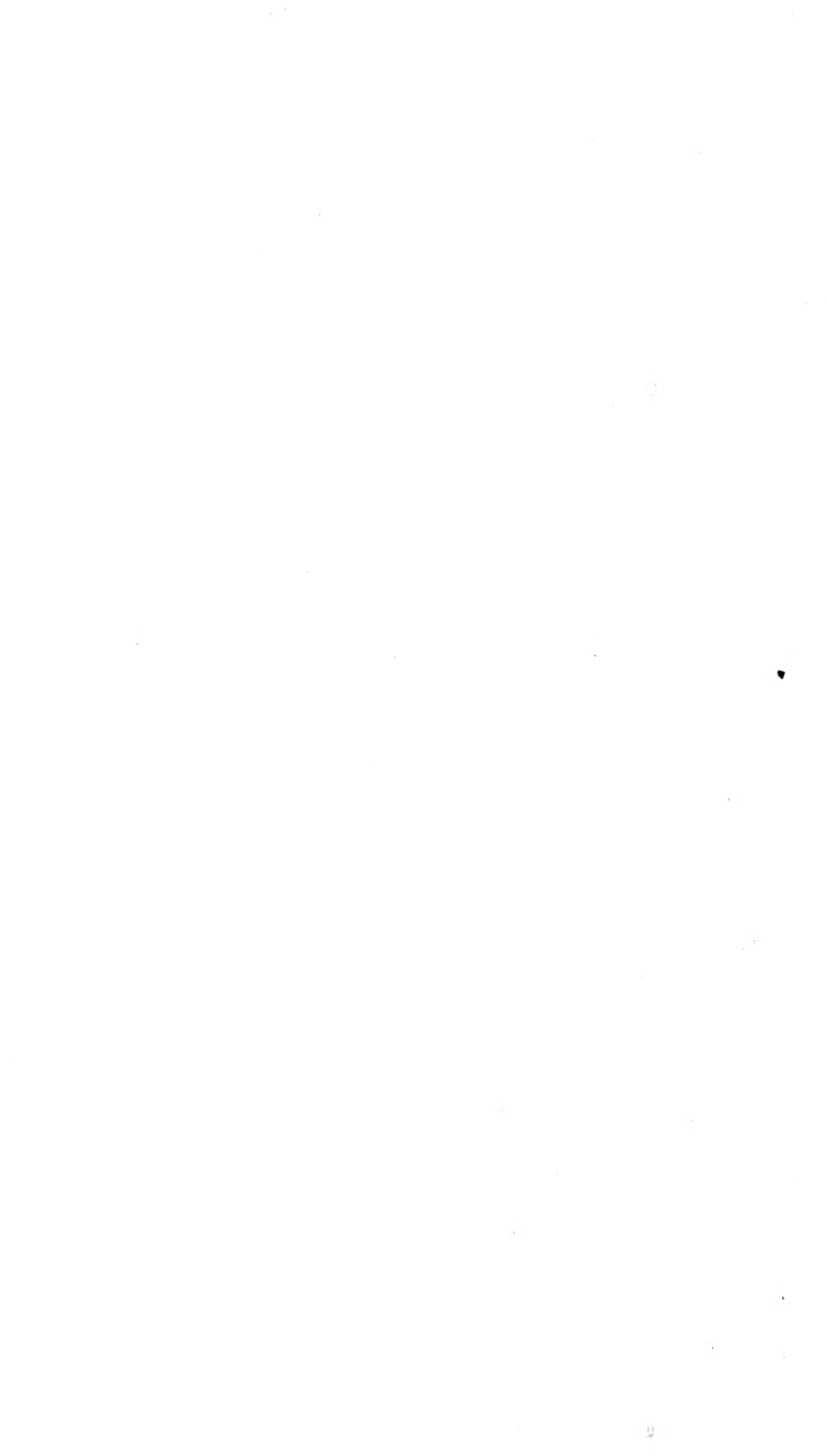
flavour of the peasants' thought and speech; a flavour which cannot be given by the use of any English dialect—for the Russian peasant makes no mistakes in grammar and few in pronunciation; what distinguishes his speech from that of the cultured classes is a more vivid picturesqueness, and a surprising variety of expression, both in his bold humour and in his touching feelings.

Thanks to Mrs. Tollemache's masterful command of her own language she has been able to convey the atmosphere of that little pearl among tales, "The Sealed Angel," and the tragedy, the poetry, the vivid realism of the other pieces which go to make up this volume. No Russian, even the most sensitive to the spirit of our literature, will find a single passage in it that would do injustice to our beloved mother tongue. We can only express our deepest thanks to Mrs. Tollemache for her perfect apprehension and refined interpretation of what is so dear to our hearts.

N. JARINTZOFF.

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INTRODUCTION

It may be well for English readers to know that there are other Russian authors worthy of their attention besides Tourgueneff, Tolstoy, and a few others. The lesser lights are liable to be forgotten or to remain unknown to the outside world, though their own country values them.

The quaint story of "The Sealed Angel," by Leescov, is a curious picture of superstition in the sect of Old Believers, and shows their devout religious feeling which valued the work of the old painters because, like Fra Angelico, they looked beyond material objects and were able to catch some glimpse of divine realities.

In this volume will be found some extracts from Grigorovitch and Nekrasov, not as giving an adequate idea of their literary work, but with the wish to stimulate the reader to desire more intimate knowledge of these writers so full of freshness and originality, and in such close touch with nature.

Grigorovitch, the author of many novels, has been called the Dickens of Russia, and a popular edition of his works has been published.

The Russian Government considers his writings eminently suitable for schools and general readers, as his style is simpler than that of Tourgueneff.

A Russian critic declares that Grigorovitch has left a valuable portrait-gallery of life in Russia as it was sixty years ago, for it is not only peasants and fishermen who live in his novels, but blind wandering beggars, and the gentry living on their estates.

The poet Nekrasov has written several long poems, and the extracts I have made I give in prose, as I feared to lose the Russian flavour if I attempted verse.

In the gruesome story of "Grandfather Saul" we see the long-suffering peasant turning at last against his foreign oppressor.

In his "General Toptigin" I am told there is a covert allusion to the rough and rude behaviour of some generals; while in "The Nightingales" and "The Grandfather" there is the delicate touch of pathos which hints at long years of suffering and oppression.

My best thanks are due to Mrs. Jarintzoff for her kind help in my work.

B. L. T.

BORDIGHERA, *March* 1913.

THE SEALED ANGEL

By N. C. LEESCOV

THE SEALED ANGEL

CHAPTER I

IT was Christmas time. The weather had become very severe, a cruel snowstorm was raging, one of those which make winter in the Steppes famous; a number of people had been driven by it to take refuge in the lonely post-house standing by itself in the midst of the level, limitless plain. Here were gathered together a crowd of gentlefolk, merchants, and peasants. It was quite impossible to pay attention to differences of rank and office in such a night shelter: wherever you turned you jostled against people; some were drying themselves, others warming themselves, others again were seeking even the smallest corner where they could take refuge. In the dark, low cottage overflowing with travellers the air was foul and a thick steam rose from the wet clothes; there seemed to be hardly a vacant place, either on the floor or on the stove or on the benches, and even on the

muddy earthen floor people were lying everywhere. The landlord, a rough peasant, was not pleased either with his guests or his gains. He angrily slammed the door after the last arrivals, two merchants in a sledge; he then locked the door and, hanging up the key in the corner of the hut where the icons hung said decidedly :

“Now whoever you are who wish to come in you may beat your head against the door but I shall not open.” He had hardly finished saying this and having taken off his ample sheepskin pelisse and crossed himself with the ancient great cross, he was prepared to slip on to the hot stove, when a timid hand knocked on the window. “Who is there?” cried the landlord in a loud, impatient voice.

“We,” was answered in a muffled tone through the window.

“Well, and what do you want?”

“For Christ’s sake let us in; we have lost our way and are frozen.”

“And how many are you?”

“Not many, not many; we are eighteen in all,” said the speaker at the window, stammering and with his teeth chattering; evidently a man thoroughly frozen.

"I have nowhere to put you, the whole house is crammed with people."

"Let us in at least to warm ourselves."

"And who are you?"

"We are carters."

"Are your carts empty or full?"

"We are laden with skins of beasts."

"Skins; you are carrying skins, and you ask to pass the night here? Well, to be sure, nice people appear in Russia now! Be off with you."

"But what are they to do?" said a traveller lying in a coat lined with bearskin.

"Let them unload their skins and sleep under them, that's what they can do," answered the landlord; and having soundly rated the carters, he lay down on the stove and never stirred.

The traveller who was under the bearskin made an energetic protest against the cruelty of the landlord, but the latter paid no attention to his remarks. But he was answered from a far-off corner by a small red-haired man with a pointed wedge-shaped beard.

"Oh, don't condemn the landlord, sir," said he, "his suggestion is right—they are in no danger with their furs."

"Oh, indeed," answered in a questioning voice the traveller in the bearskin.

“They are certainly in no danger of freezing, and it is much better that he should not let them come in.”

“And why?”

“Because they have now received his useful suggestion, and besides, if another helpless traveller comes here there will be room for him.”

Then the bearskin speaker said, “But whom is the devil likely to send here?”

The landlord now broke in. “Listen, and don’t you chatter idle words. Is it likely that the Enemy would send anyone here where there are such holy pictures? Do you not see that we have here an icon of the Saviour and one of the Mother of God?”

The red-haired man added his testimony. “That’s true. No saved soul would be brought here by the devil, but his guardian angel would lead him.”

“Well, I never understood that, and as I am very uncomfortable here I can’t believe that my guardian angel brought me,” answered the garrulous bearskin. Here the landlord spat angrily, and the red-haired man muttered amiably that everyone cannot see the angel’s path, and only a real Christian can have an idea of it.

"You speak of this as if you were yourself such a real Christian," said the bearskin.

"Yes, and so I am."

"What do you mean? Have you really seen an angel, and did he guide you?"

"Yes, I saw him and he always guided me."

"Are you joking?"

"God forbid that I should joke about this matter."

"And did you really see him, and how did the angel appear to you?"

"This, dear sir, is a very long story."

"But it is quite impossible to go to sleep here, and it would be very kind of you if you would tell us that story now."

"Do you really wish it?"

"Pray tell it to us, we are listening to you. But as you are there on your knees you had better come here to us. Perhaps we can manage to squeeze a little and sit together."

"No, thank you, why should I crowd you? For this story which I am about to tell you should rather be told on my knees, because it is a sacred matter and a very strange one."

"Well, as you like; but only begin to tell us quickly how you saw the angel and what he did to you."

"I will begin as you wish."

CHAPTER II

“I AM, as you may easily see, quite a plain man, nothing more than a peasant, and I have been brought up and educated in a village. I don’t belong here, but come from far away, and by trade I am a stone-mason, and brought up in the old Russian Orthodox Church. As I was an orphan I went from my youth up with other masons from the village to distant work in various places, but always in the same guild under a peasant from our own place, Luke, son of Cyril. This Luke is alive to this day, and is our best contractor. His business was an old-established one carried on from the time of his ancestors, and he did not lessen it but rather increased it and lived in comfort and abundance, and was an excellent man and not quarrelsome. And therefore we were ready to follow him everywhere. Whither did we not go? It seemed to me that we went all over Russia, and I never knew a better or more serious master. We lived with him, as it were with a kind patriarch, and he was our instructor not only in our trade but in our religion. We followed him in our labours, as the Jews followed Moses in their wanderings

in the desert. We even had our tabernacle with us, and never parted from it: that is, we had the divine blessing with us. Luke loved his holy pictures dearly, and he possessed, dear sir, the most wonderful pictures, painted in the best taste of ancient times, either genuine Greek, or by the best artist of Novgorod. Each of those pictures seemed to surpass the rest, not only by its setting¹ but by the subtlety and delicacy of the artist's talent. Such excellence I never saw anywhere, and there were ever so many different subjects in whose name the icons were painted, such as reverent fathers, martyrs, and apostles. There were three angels with Abraham bowing down to them by the oak of Mamre; in a word, all this beauty cannot be expressed, and no one paints such pictures now anywhere either, in Moscow or Petersburg or Palekov; I say nothing of Greece, for this art has long ago been lost there. We all loved these holy pictures with a passionate love and burnt holy oil before them, and at the expense of the guild we kept a horse and a special cart on which we carried everywhere two great cases

¹ The word *reeza* is not a frame, but the gold or silver plating put over part of the icon, leaving only the face and hands visible, but showing the outlines of the painting. The word "setting" will now be used for "*reeza*."

of them wherever we went. We generally had with us two icons, one from the Moscow copies of old Greek artists: the holy Virgin praying in the garden and before her all the old cypresses and olive trees are bowing down to the earth. But the other was the Guardian Angel which came from Stroganov. It is impossible to describe what artistic beauty there was in these two pictures. You look at the Virgin and see the simple soulless trees bowing down before her, and your heart is touched and trembles; you look at the Angel . . . Joy! This Angel was in truth too wonderful to describe; his countenance, as I always see it, seemed shining with divinity and readiness to help. His glance was compassionate, his dear little ears were pointed as if ever ready to hearken, his vesture shone and his tunic seemed powdered with gold; wings sprang from his shoulders, he wore a girdle; on his breast was the face of the babe Emmanuel: a cross in his right hand and in his left a fiery sword. Wonderful, wonderful! The locks on his dear little head were curly, and auburn, winding beneath his ears, and every hair was painted as if with a needle, and every curl nestled against the next curl. His wings were broad and white as snow, and each

feather lay side by side, but the background of the picture was azure blue. You look at these wings and awe overpowers you ; you pray ‘Overshadow me,’ and at once you grow calm, peace dwells in your soul. What a wonderful icon this was. These two pictures were to us what the Holy of Holies was to the Jews.

“All those icons of which I told you before we carried in a special case on a horse, but these two we did not even put on a horse, but we carried them ourselves. The wife of Luke, Michaela, used to carry the icon of the Virgin, but the picture of the Angel, Luke bore himself on his breast. He made for this icon a bag of gold brocade fastened with a button, and on the front was a red cross made of some rich scarlet stuff, and a thick green cord was sewn above, that he might hang it round his neck ; and as Luke always carried this icon on his breast, and wherever we went it went before us, so this Angel guided us. We went from place to place to some new works on the steppes, Luke going before us, and, instead of a stick, waving a measuring rod ; after him went the cart carrying the icon, the Mother of God, and after them we, the whole guild, marched. And here were grassy fields and

flowery meadows, and there herds pastured, and pipers played on their pipes . . . all this was delightful to heart and mind. All went well with us, and it was astonishing how successful we were in all our undertakings; all our labours prospered, harmony reigned amongst us and good news reached us from home, and all this time the Angel that went before us blessed us, and it seemed that it would be harder to part with this wonderful icon than with life.

“Indeed you may well imagine that nothing would induce us to part with this sacred picture. In the meanwhile such a sorrow awaited us! and was prepared for us, as we afterwards understood, not by the subtlety of man, but by our Guardian Angel himself. He desired for himself this insult in order to make us understand that affliction is sacred, and to point out to us the true path, in comparison with which the road we had hitherto trodden was a dark and pathless forest.

“Pray tell me now whether you understand my story, and if I am not wearying you in claiming your attention?”

“No, not at all, not at all,” we all cried out, “be so kind as to continue; we are much interested in this story.”

“As you wish, I will obey you and tell you as well as I can the wonderful deeds of the Angel that happened amongst us.”

CHAPTER III

“WE went to a large city to carry out some great works there; we had to build a wide and important stone bridge over a great body of water, the river Dnieper. The city stood on the right bend of the shore, but we were on the left, on an outlying meadow, and a wonderful landscape spread before us. Ancient churches, holy monasteries with many dried bodies of saints, well-planted gardens and trees, the tall spires of poplars, such as you see depicted in old books. You gaze at all this and exclaim in your heart, ‘How beautiful’! You know we are but simple people, and yet we can feel the beauty of natural scenery which God has given to us, and we admired this place so much, that even on the first day we began to build a temporary dwelling. And, first of all, we drove in high piles, because the place was low and near the water; then we began to build a chamber for the holy pictures, and near to it a storehouse. In the chamber we placed all the holy pictures, as is right,

according to the laws of our fathers; along the walls we ranged the icons in three rows the first for the large icons, and higher up the two shelves for the smaller ones, and thus they led like a ladder to the crucifix itself. But the Angel we placed on the reading-desk from which Luke read the Scriptures. But Luke and Michaela lived in the storehouse, and we ourselves lived in a small wooden hut close by. Thus we began to build, as men who have to stay in a place for a long time, and our little town sprang up on piles over against the handsome, solidly-built city. We began our work, and everything went on as well as possible. Our money was punctually paid by the Englishman at the office. God gave us such good health that no one was ill during the summer. But Luke's wife, Michaela, even began to complain, saying of herself, 'I am not pleased, for I am getting too stout.' But we, the Old Believers, were specially glad that we who had suffered persecution everywhere at this time for our ceremonies, were here free to worship; for here was neither a governor of the city, nor a provincial governor, nor a priest: we saw no one, and no one raised any obstacles to our religious rites. We were at liberty to pray, and when our hours of work were

over, we gathered together in the chamber, and there so many lamps burnt before the holy pictures that our hearts grew warm. Luke started the hymn-singing himself, and we all joined in so heartily, that sometimes in still weather we could be heard in the far-off suburb. No one disturbed our worship, and many even came to it; it pleased not only the simple peasants who were accustomed to the Russian service, but even those of another faith. Many Church people who were of respectable character, but never went to the churches by the river, would come under our windows to listen, and even begin to pray. We never drove them away; in fact, it was impossible to drive them all away, for strangers who were interested in the old Russian service came to listen with approbation. The chief architect, an Englishman, Jacob Jacobovitch, even came with a notebook under our window and listened attentively that he might note down our tunes, and would sometimes return to his work humming to himself what he had caught up of the tune, 'The Lord God hath appeared to us,' but, of course, he sang it in a different way, because it was impossible in the new western notation to seize accurately the hymn-set in the old measure. The

English, let us do them this credit, are a most strict and devout people, and they loved us much and praised us, and considered us worthy folk. In a word, the Guardian Angel had guided us into a happy country, and opened to us the hearts of everyone, and the beautiful face of Nature.

“And in such a peaceful spirit as I have described to you we lived for about three years. We prospered in everything, and success poured down on us as it were from the horn of plenty, when suddenly we perceived that we had amongst us two vessels chosen by God for our punishment. One of these was the blacksmith Maroe, and the other the accountant Pemen Ivanoff. Maroe was quite a simple fellow and uneducated, which is rare amongst the Old Believers, but he was a singular man; awkward to look at, something like a camel, with a chest like a boar, one shoulder higher than the other. On his forehead was a mat of thick hair, and on the top of his head was a smooth place like a threshing-floor. His speech was thick and difficult to understand; he kept smacking his lips. His mind worked slowly, and his thoughts were so incoherent that he never could learn the prayers by heart, but now and then he would

pick out a word and go hammering at it. But he was sharp-witted as to the future, and had the gift of prophecy, and could give hints which would come true. But Pemen, on the contrary, was a precise man, who liked to be important, and spoke with such acuteness and eloquence that his speeches astonished his hearers. His character also was lively and fascinating. Maroe was an old man of seventy, but Pemen was middle-aged and smart-looking. He had curly hair with a parting in the middle, bushy eyebrows and a ruddy face. In a word he was a dandy. These were the two vessels of wrath, and suddenly we had to drink a bitter draught.

CHAPTER IV

“THE bridge which we were building on eight granite piers had already risen high out of the water, and in the summer of the fourth year we began to clamp the iron chains on the pillars. But here a small obstacle occurred; when we began to fasten the chains to the piers many of the bolts were found to be too long. Now these bolts were made in England of the best steel, and were as thick as the arm of a stout man. We could not heat these bolts, as

it would spoil the steel, and no tool could saw them through.

“Maroe, the blacksmith, found out suddenly a means to cut off a piece of the bolt. He put a layer of cart grease mixed with sand round the place, then he plunged it into snow, heaped salt round it, and began to turn it round and round in the snow; then he snatched it out of the snow, put it on a hot anvil, and as he brought his hammer down with all its force, the end of the bolt flew off like a piece of wax candle cut off by scissors. All the English and Germans came to look at this ingenious device of Maroe. They looked and they looked, and suddenly they burst out laughing, and began to talk among themselves, and said in our tongue: ‘You Russian, you are a brick; you understand something about chemistry.’ I cannot say how much of a chemist he was, but he understood nothing of science, but only used the wits God had given him. But our Pemen Ivanoff began to boast about this, and the workmen were divided into two parties, and began to dispute. Some attributed the matter to science, of which our Maroe was ignorant; but others said that evidently God had blessed us by a miracle such as we had never seen before, and this last idea was the

beginning of our trouble. I have already told you that Pemen Ivanoff was a weak and pleasure-loving man, and now I must explain why we kept him in our guild. He went into the town to get provisions for us, he bought whatever was necessary; we sent him to the post office to arrange about our passports and money, and he brought back our new passports. All this he did exceedingly well—indeed, I may say in truth that in this capacity he was quite necessary to us and most useful. The real serious-minded Old Believer always disliked such business very much, and always avoided having anything to do with Government clerks, but Pemen enjoyed the bustle of affairs, and had a large acquaintance in the city on the other side of the river. He met merchants and gentlemen whom he had to see about the affairs of the guild; they all respected him and recognised him as one of our chief men. We, of course, laughed at this fancy of his, and his delight in drinking with the gentlemen and talking big. They spoke of him as our chief; he only smiled, but he chuckled inwardly—in a word, he was a braggart, and this brought our Pemen to acquaintance with a man in a good position. His wife was a native of our district; she was

literary, and had read about us in some new books in which, unknown to us, we had been described, and suddenly, I don't know why, she declared she liked the Old Believers very much. Here was an astonishing affair for which she was chosen as a means! Well, she liked us, and she went on liking us, and when our Pemen had to call on her husband she always asked him to stay and drink tea. This pleased him, and he would talk very freely with her.

“Then she chattered with her woman's tongue: ‘I know that you Old Believers are so holy and so moral, and such a blessing rests upon you.’ At this the eyes of our dandy twinkled; he put his head on one side and smoothed his beard, and began in a honeyed voice: ‘We are indeed, lady; we keep the laws of our fathers, we do such and such things, we keep the rules and observe the good customs one toward another.’ In a word, he told her all sorts of things which are not suitable in a conversation with a fashionable lady. But she was interested, and went on to say: ‘I have heard that God's Benediction has appeared to you in a visible form,’ and he directly assented and answered, ‘It is indeed so, lady; it appeared in a visible form.’

‘Visible?’ ‘Visible, yes, lady, quite visible; for just in these last days one man broke through strong steel as if it were a cobweb.’ The lady threw up her little hands in surprise. ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘how interesting. Oh, I am so fond of marvels, and I believe in them! I wish,’ she said, ‘that you would kindly order your Old Believer to pray for me that God would give me a daughter. I have two sons, but I do so wish to have a daughter. Is it possible?’ ‘Why not? It is possible,’ answered Pemen; ‘quite possible, only on such occasions it is always necessary that you should give holy oil for the lamps.’ The lady with great pleasure gave him ten roubles for the oil, and he put the money in his pocket and said, ‘That is well, be of good hope and I will arrange it.’

“Of course Pemen said nothing to us of all this, but the lady bore a daughter. And oh, what a fuss she made about it, and even before she had quite recovered she called our good-for-nothing to her, and honoured him as if he were a wonder-worker, and he accepted it all. To such a point had the man come, his mind was darkened and his feelings were congealed. In the course of the year the lady made another request to our God that her

husband might take a country house for the summer, and again her wish was fulfilled, and again she gave Pemen money for holy oil and candles; and these offerings he stored away somewhere, but not on our side of the river. In fact it was wonderful what miracles were accomplished. The lady's eldest son was at school; he was an idle fellow and would learn nothing, but when the time of examination drew near she sent for Pemen, and ordered him to pray that her son might be put into a higher class. 'This is a difficult matter. I shall have to drive all my people together, and make them pray all night, and they shall howl by candle-light till morning.' But she made no difficulty about this, but gave him thirty roubles if only they would pray! And what do you suppose happened? Her truant son had such good luck that he was removed into a higher class. The lady almost went out of her mind with joy that our God had done so much for her. She made one request after another to Pemen, and he was so importunate with God that he obtained for her health, and a legacy, and a good post for her husband, and so many orders that they could not all be hung on his breast, and he carried one in his pocket, as they say. Such wonders happened,

but we knew nothing about it. But the hour drew near when all this would be cleared up, and these wonders would be changed for others.

CHAPTER V

“THERE was some trouble in a Jewish town of the province among the Jewish merchants. I cannot tell you exactly whether it was about money frauds or about cheating the custom dues; but it so happened that the Government found it out, and it was foreseen that the matter would be very profitable for those who had to examine into it. For this reason the lady came to our Pemen and said: ‘Pemen Ivanovitch, here are twenty roubles for the holy oil and candles; tell your people to pray as heartily as they can that my husband may be sent to this town to look into the affair.’ This was no trouble to him. By this time he was quite accustomed to collect his oil duties; and he answered, ‘Very well, lady, I will give the order.’ ‘Oh, let them pray very earnestly, for I want this very much.’ ‘If they dared, lady, to neglect my orders and not to pray earnestly,’ said Pemen, reassuring her, ‘I would make them fast until they had prayed.’ Then

he took the money, for he was a rogue ; but the lady that very night heard her husband had received the appointment. The lady was so struck by the blessing she had received, that she was not satisfied to trust to our prayers, but was very anxious to give thanks in her own person to the holy icon.

“She spoke of this to Pemen, but he was frightened, because he knew that she would not be allowed to visit our icons ; but the lady would take no refusal. ‘If you will allow me,’ said she, ‘I will take a boat and come to you this evening with my son.’ Pemen tried to persuade her that it was better that they should pray for her, adding, ‘We have such a Guardian Angel before whom you can burn the holy oils, and we will entrust your husband’s safety to his care.’ ‘I am very glad,’ said she, ‘very glad that there is such an Angel, and here is money to burn holy oil in three lamps for him, and I will come to see it.’ Pemen was much disturbed ; he came back to us and told us the lady’s purpose, and excused himself, saying, ‘I tried to dissuade her, but as she insisted I could not refuse because her husband is a man who is useful to us.’ He told them a lot of rubbish, but not exactly the truth.

“Well, however unpleasant the visit would

be to us, there was nothing to be done. We quickly took down the icons from the walls and hid them in boxes, and out of other boxes we took icons to replace them, which were of no value and were kept there by us only in case the officials made a search. We put them on shelves and awaited our guest. The lady came, but she was so befurbeled that she was fearful to see, sweeping everything with her ample garments, and with her eyeglass she looked at all the sham icons we had there. And she asked, 'Pray tell me where is the wonder-working Angel?' Here was the difficulty. We tried to divert her attention. 'We have no such Angel,' we said; and though she went on questioning Pemen, we would not show her the Angel, and took her away and offered her tea and other refreshments.

"She did not please us at all, but why, I cannot say. Her appearance revolted us, although she was considered to be a beauty. She was tall and willowy and thin like a goat, and she had very marked eyebrows."

"And how was it this beauty did not please you?" said the man in the bearskin coat, interrupting the story-teller.

"Excuse me, how could a serpentine form please us?"

"Then you don't reckon a woman a beauty unless she is like a clod of earth."

"A clod of earth!" the story-teller repeated, without being offended. "What do you take us for? We have a Russian idea of what a woman's figure should be, and it does not answer to the present flighty, fashionable type. But still we do not admire a clod; we do not admire the long-legged maypoles, and we like a woman to stand not on long legs but on strong legs, so that she may not stumble but roll about everywhere like a ball, and the willowy one will run and get her legs entangled. *We* do not like a serpent-like slimness, but we like something solid and plump; although it is not so supple, yet one feels motherhood in it, and good-humour and kindness.

"Now with regard to her nose; we don't like a hook-nose but rather tip-tilted, for in the family life you would find this much pleasanter than a thin, proud nose. Now with regard to the eyebrow, the eyebrow in a face reveals the character, and therefore it is necessary that a woman's eyebrows should not be knit but open and arched. For it is easier for a man to speak openly to such a woman, and she attracts people to her home. But the present taste has of course departed from this.

good type; it admires fragility in women, but this is quite useless. But I see that we have wandered from our subject, and I had better go on with my story.

“Pemen, like a man of business, had observed that we began to criticise our guest, and said, ‘What is the matter? She is kind-looking.’ But we answered, ‘We can’t see any kindness in her face, but thank heaven she is gone’; and we were so pleased to have got rid of her that we began to burn some incense to get rid of the smell of her! After this we cleared away the traces of our guest in the room; we put back the changed icons in the boxes and took out the real ones, and arranged them on the shelves as they were before. We sprinkled holy water on them, we prayed, and then we each went to our night’s rest; and God knows why, but we could not sleep well that night, but were restless and uncomfortable.

CHAPTER VI

“THE next morning we all went to work, each to his post, but Luke was not there. This was surprising, considering how punctual he was; but it seemed to me still more surprising when he appeared at 8 o’clock very

pale and agitated. As I knew that he was a man with much self-control, and not given to worrying about trifles, I observed him attentively and asked, 'What is the matter with you, Luke?' And he answered, 'I will tell you afterwards.' Now I in my youth was extremely curious, and I suddenly had a foreboding that some evil was threatening our religion; for I revered our faith, and was never an unbeliever. But I could not endure the suspense any longer, and on some pretext I left my work and ran home, and said to myself, 'No one will be there but Michaela, and I can find out something from her.'

"Although Luke did not confide in her, yet she with all her simplicity was extremely shrewd, and could read his secrets; and she would not conceal them from me, for she had brought me up since my orphan childhood as her son, and was quite like a second mother to me. When I rushed into the house I saw her sitting on the steps outside the door, in an old skirt and a cloak just thrown over her shoulders, and she herself looked ill and sad and much disturbed. 'Dear mother,' said I, 'why are you sitting here?' 'Where can I go to, Marochka?' My name is Mark, but she with her mother feeling called me

Marochka. Then I thought to myself, 'What nonsense is she talking? Why has she nowhere to go to?' And I said, 'Why don't you stay inside your cottage?' 'Tis impossible,' she said, 'Marochka, for grandfather Maroe is praying in the large chamber.' 'Oh,' I thought, 'then it is some misfortune about our religion.' Then Michaela began to tell me: 'Of course, Marochka, you don't know what happened to us during the night!' 'No, dear mother, I don't know.' 'Oh, dreadful things.' 'Tell me quickly, dear mother.' 'Oh, I don't know how to tell you.' 'Why can't you tell me,' said I, 'I am not a stranger; am I not as a son to you?' 'I know, my dear,' she answered, 'that you are like a son to me, but I don't trust myself to tell it to you properly, because I am stupid and ignorant; but wait a bit, your uncle will come when his work is done and he will tell you all.' But I couldn't wait so long, and I urged her, 'Tell me, tell me directly all that happened.' But she, I saw, was blinking with her eyes, and they began to fill with tears; then suddenly she wiped them away with her neckerchief, and whispered softly to me, 'My child, this night the Guardian Angel came to us.' I was much agitated by her words. 'Tell me, I pray you, quickly, how this wonder

happened, and who were the witnesses of it.' And she answered: 'Child, it was an inconceivable wonder, but there were no witnesses but myself, because all this happened in the very middle of the night, and I alone was awake.' And then, dear sir, she told me her story. 'I went to sleep,' she said, 'after saying my prayer, and I don't know how long I slept; but suddenly I saw in my dream a fire—a great fire; it seemed that all we had was burnt, and the river was carrying the ashes away; it swirled round the tops of the piles, and swallowed up everything in its depths.' But as to Michaela herself it seemed as if she had jumped out in an old chemise full of holes, and she stood by the river, and over against her on the other shore was a great red pillar, and on that pillar was a small white cock, who flapped his wings. Then she asked him, 'Who are you?' because she had a feeling that this bird was going to foretell something. But the little cock suddenly called out in a human voice, 'Amen.' After that he disappeared and was no more seen. Then a great silence seemed to reign round her, and there was such a calm in the air that a strange feeling came over her that she could not breathe. Then she woke up and found herself lying in bed and listened, for there

was the bleating of a little lamb outside her door, and she understood by the cry that it was a very young lamb, whose birth-fleece had never been touched. In a little silvery voice it bleated out Baa, and suddenly by the sound she could hear it going into the chapel with its little hoofs going pit-a-pat on the floor, as if it was searching for something. Michaela thought to herself, 'Lord Jesus Christ, what is this? We have no sheep in all our suburb; no lambs, then whence comes this little creature to us? And besides, how did it get into our cottage? Perhaps in the bustle of yesterday we forgot to shut the gate: Glory to God,' she thought, 'that it was only a lamb that got in, and not a dog to defile the holy icons.' Then she tried to wake up Luke. 'Luke,' she cried, 'Luke, get up quickly, for our door is open and a little lamb has jumped into the cottage.' But Luke unluckily was in a deep sleep, and Michaela could not wake him up. He grunted a little, but said nothing. And when Michaela gave him a push, he only grunted the louder. Then Michaela began to call out, 'Rise, in the name of Christ.' Directly she mentioned that name something in the room gave a piercing scream, and Luke jumped up from his bed and rushed forward. But he

suddenly stopped in the middle of the room as if he had run up against an iron wall. 'Light a candle, woman, light a candle quickly,' he cried to Michaela, but he himself did not stir from the spot. She lighted a candle and ran to him. He was pale, like a man condemned to death, and trembled so that not only the sweat broke out on his neck but his legs shook under him. His wife said to him, 'Father, what is the matter with you?' And he only pointed with his finger to the place where the picture of the Angel had been. It was empty, but the Angel himself lay on the ground at the feet of Luke.

"Luke at once went off to Grandfather Maroe and said, 'Such and such things my wife saw, and such and such things happened in our home; come and look.' Maroe came and went down on his knees before the Angel lying on the floor, and remained there a long time immovable, like a marble gravestone, and then raising his hand he scratched the bald place on his head and said gently, 'Bring here twelve clean new bricks.' Luke at once brought them, and Maroe saw that they were clean and straight out of the fiery kiln. Then he told Luke to put them one upon another to make a kind of pillar. This he covered with a clean

cloth and placed on it the icon. And then Maroe, bowing down to the ground, cried out, 'Angel of God, let the soles of thy feet go where they will.' And as soon as he had said these words, suddenly there was a knock at the door and an unknown voice cried out, 'Hi, you heretics! Where is your chief?' Luke opened the door, and he saw a soldier with a medal standing there. Luke asked him, 'Who is it you want?' 'I want,' said he, 'that man you call Pemen, who visited the lady.' Then Luke at once sent his wife to fetch Pemen, and he asked the soldier, 'What is the matter; why have they sent for Pemen in the night?' And the soldier answered, 'I don't know for certain, but the Jews have given some trouble to our master'; but what it really was he could not say. 'I have heard,' he said, 'that he sealed them and they sealed him; but how they had sealed each other no one could understand or explain!' At that moment Pemen arrived, and he, like a Jew, rolled his eyes first here and then there. He evidently did not know what to say. Then Luke said, 'You have been after some rascally trick; now go and complete your rascally work.' Then he and the soldier went off in a boat. In about an hour Pemen returned

to us, and though he tried to look unconcerned we saw that he was uneasy in himself. Luke began asking him, 'Tell us, you had better tell us all, you scapegrace, what have you been doing there?' But he answered, 'Nothing.' But though he said it was nothing, it really was anything but nothing.

CHAPTER VII

"AN astonishing trick was played on the official for whom our Pemen had prayed. As I told you before, the official started for the Jewish town, and arrived there late at night, when no one was expecting him. He went straight to all the shops and sealed them, and let the police know that the next morning he would go to examine them. The Jews of course knew this at once, and that very night they went to see him, to try to arrange a bargain with him, as they had a large stock of contraband goods. They came at once and offered the official ten thousand roubles. He said, 'I cannot take this; I am a high official in a position of trust, and I cannot take a bribe.' He repeated again, 'I cannot take it.' They then offered twenty. 'You don't understand,' said he, 'that I cannot pos-

sibly take this, as I have already let the police know that I am going to-morrow to examine your goods.' They again muttered among themselves and said, 'Never mind, your worship, it does not in the least matter that you have let the police know; we will give you at once twenty-five thousand roubles if you will only let us have your seal till to-morrow morning, then you can go to sleep quietly: and we want nothing more.'

"The official thought it well over, and although he considered himself a great personage, yet it is evident that the hearts of great people are not of stone, so he took the twenty-five thousand roubles, and gave them his seal with which he had sealed. Then he went off to bed. The Jews of course spent all the night in clearing their cellars of goods which ought to pay duty; they then put the seals on as before. The official was still sleeping when they returned to his antechamber, yet he had them shown in, and they thanked him and said, 'And now, your honourable worship, you can examine our goods.' But he, as if he had heard nothing, said at once, 'Give me quickly my seal.' Then the Jews answered, 'But give us back our money.' The official said, 'What, what?' But the Jews said, 'We

only left the money with you as a pledge.' 'What! as a pledge?' 'Yes,' said they, 'as a pledge.' 'You lie,' said he, 'betrayers of Christ; you gave me the money as a gift.' But they just nudged each other and laughed. 'Listen,' said they; 'we might perhaps have given it, hem, hem, but do you think we are so stupid, and are like peasants without breeding, that we should offer a bribe to such a high official?'

"Well, did you ever hear such a story? Of course the gentleman might have given up the money, and the affair would have been over, but he delayed and hesitated, because he did not like to part with it. The morning came; all the shops in the town were shut; people were walking about and were astonished; the police were asking for the seals, but the Jews cried out, 'What is this Government order? This high official wants to ruin us.' It was a terrible affair; the official shut himself up, and nearly went out of his mind. But in the evening he sent for those crafty Jews and said, 'Well, take your money, you cursed folk, and give me back my seal.' But they would not give it back, but said, 'We can't do that; we have done no business the whole day, and now your honour must give us fifty thousand

roubles.' Just think what a business; and the Jews threatened, 'If you do not give us fifty thousand now, to-morrow you will have to give us five and twenty thousand more.' The official could not sleep at night, but in the morning he again sent for the Jews, and he gave them back all the money he had taken from them, and besides that, gave them a cheque for twenty-five thousand roubles. He then went off to make the examination of goods, but of course found nothing contraband. Then he went quickly home to his wife, and began to storm and rage. 'Where,' said he, 'am I to find twenty-five thousand roubles to cash the cheque that I gave the Jews? I must sell the village that you had as a dowry,' he said to his wife. But she objected. 'I would not part with it for the world.' Then he said, 'It is your fault; you got this post for me through those heretics, and you said their Angel would protect me, and you see what a good Guardian he has been.' But she answered, 'It is you who are to blame. Why were you so stupid? Why did you not arrest those Jews and declare that they had stolen your seal? But in the meanwhile,' said she, 'do not disturb yourself, and I will arrange the matter, and others shall pay for your mistake.' And suddenly she

called out to someone who was there. 'Go directly,' said she, 'to the Dneiper and bring me back the head clerk of the Old Believers.' Her messenger went, of course, and returned with our Pemen, and the lady immediately and without any preamble spoke: 'Listen to me; I know you are a clever man, and you understand what I want. A little unpleasantness has happened to my husband; some rogues have fleeced him, Jews, you understand; and now we want, as soon as possible, twenty-five thousand roubles, and we do not know where to get them in such a hurry. But I have asked you here, and trust you, because the Old Believers are clever and rich people, and I believe firmly that God helps you in everything, and I trust that you will kindly give me twenty-five thousand roubles; and I, for my part, will tell all the ladies of your wonder-working icon, and you will be surprised to see how much money you will receive for wax and oil.'

"You can easily imagine, my dear sirs, what our rogue thought of this change of affairs. I cannot tell you in what words, but I am quite sure that he began vehemently to assure her that we could not produce such a sum; but she, this modern Herodias, would not

believe us. 'I know well,' said she, 'that you heretics are rich, and that twenty-five thousand roubles are a trifle to you; when my father was in service in Moscow the Old Believers, not once, but often obliged him in this way, and this twenty-five thousand roubles is a mere nothing.' Pemen of course tried to explain to her that the Moscow Old Believers were rich, but that we were simply workmen, hired by the day, and could not compete with the rich folk of Moscow. But she in truth had had a good Moscow education. 'How can you say that to me? Don't I know how many wonder-working icons you have, and have you not often told me how much wax and oil is sent to you from all parts of Russia? No, I don't wish to listen to you, but unless I have the money at once my husband shall go to the Governor and let him know all about you, how you pray and worship, and you will suffer for it.' Poor Pemen almost fell off the steps; he went home, as I have described to you, and the only word he said was, 'Nothing.' But he was as red as if he had come out of the bath, and went into a corner and blew his nose. Well, Luke at last got something out of him by questioning him, but of course he did not reveal everything, but only showed what a

miserable creature he was. At last he said, 'The lady wants me to get you to lend her five thousand roubles.' Then Luke of course came down upon him for this: 'Oh, you rogue, why did you get acquainted with these people, why did you bring them here? Are we rich? Are we likely to have so much money? As it was you who started this trouble, so you must get out of it as well as you can, but you cannot get five thousand roubles out of us.' With these words Luke went off to his work, and arrived as I described to you, pale like a doomed man, because he knew what had happened in the night, and foresaw that we should get into trouble. But Pemen went off in another direction. We all saw that he started out of the reeds in a little boat and rowed over to the other side to the city; and now when Michaela had told me the whole story of the five thousand roubles which Pemen was asking for, I guessed that he had gone to ask the lady to withdraw her threats against us. With such thoughts I stood by Michaela wondering whether some harm would come to us out of this, and ought we not to take some measures lest a great evil should happen, when I suddenly saw that it was already too late to take precautions,

for a large boat was coming to the shore and I heard the noise of many voices, and turning round I saw several officials all in uniform, and with them a large number of policemen and soldiers; and I had hardly, dear sirs, exchanged a glance with Michaela when they all came straight to us, and crowded into Luke's room, and placed two sentinels at the door with drawn swords. Michaela was much agitated at the presence of these sentinels, not only because they passed close to her, but lest they should arrest her. Of course they began to push her away, but she furiously defended herself, and a scuffle began in which a policeman wounded her badly, so that she rolled down the steps like a top. In the meantime I rushed to the bridge to find Luke, then I saw that he was running to meet me with all our band of workmen. They were all up in arms, and whoever was at work came with his tools, one with a crowbar, another with his pick; they all ran up to guard their holy icons. As many as could not get into the boat to reach the shore threw themselves from the bridge into the water in their working clothes just as they stood, and swam through the cold water. You will hardly believe how terribly in earnest they were to stop this business. Twenty soldiers

had come, but although they were all in their fine uniforms yet our men were more than fifty, and all inspired with a fiery faith. They all swam through the water like seals, and so energetic were they that no heavy blows would have stopped them, and looking like dark stone figures they rushed up the bank where their holy icons were, and appeared suddenly all dripping wet.

CHAPTER VIII

“Now I must remind you that when we were talking with Michaela on the steps Grandfather Maroe was in the chamber praying, and the officials with their men found him there. He afterwards told me that as soon as they came in, the door was banged to and they straightway turned to the icons. Some extinguished the lamps, and others tore down the icons from the walls and threw them on the floor. Then they cried out to him, ‘Are you the priest?’ And he said, ‘No, I am not the priest.’ ‘Who then is your priest?’ But he answered, ‘We have no priest.’ ‘What, you have no priest; you dare to tell us that there is no priest!’ Here Maroe began to explain to them that we don’t

have a priest. But as he could not well explain, having no gift of speech, they could not understand what he meant. 'Bind him,' they said; 'put him under arrest.' Maroe allowed himself to be bound, although the bit of string with which the soldier bound his hands was nothing to him; he stood quietly and endured all this for the sake of his faith, and looked to see what would happen further. Meanwhile the officials had lighted the candles to seal the icons; one sealed them, another wrote the inventory, and a third drilled holes in them with a gimlet, and strung the icons like kettles on an iron rod. Maroe observed this sacrilegious treatment of the holy icons, but he did not stir, because he considered that God had allowed them to show such savagery. But at this moment Maroe's ear was struck by a sound; then first one policeman cried out and then another, the door flew open, our band of men, like wet seals out of the water, plunged into the room.

"But Luke met them and at once cried out, 'Stop, you dear people of Christ, don't riot in here,' and he himself, pointing to the icons strung on the iron rod, addressed the official: 'Why do you gentlemen injure these holy icons? If you have the right to take

them away from us we will not rebel against the Government—take them ; but why do you injure the wonderful artistic heirlooms of our forefathers?’ But here the husband of the lady whom Pemen knew, and who was the chief official, called out to Uncle Luke, ‘You rascal, do you dare to condemn our work?’ Now Luke was a proud peasant, but he smothered his feelings and answered quietly, ‘Will your worship allow us to make this arrangement? We have in this chamber about one hundred and fifty icons ; we will pay you three roubles for each, only do not injure the wonderful icons of our forefathers.’ The head official’s eyes glared and he called out loudly, ‘Out with you,’ but in a whisper he said, ‘Give me a hundred roubles for each picture, otherwise I will burn them all.’ Luke could not possibly grasp the idea of this sum, and he answered, ‘Good heavens! burn them if you will, but we cannot pay this money.’ Then the official remonstrated and said, ‘Oh, you bearded goat, how dare you speak to me about money?’ The official began to rage round the room and helped to string the icons on the rods and put screws on their ends so that nothing could be taken off or exchanged. And when everything was ready and they all

began to leave the room, the soldiers began to put the rods on their shoulders and bore them to the boat. But Michaela, who had followed the crowd into the chamber, had recently stolen the Guardian Angel from the reading-desk and was dragging it under her shawl into the adjoining storeroom. But her trembling hands let it drop. Oh, dear sir, how the official did rave then and call us thieves and rascals. ‘Oh, you rascals, you wanted to steal it that it might not hang on the rod, but as it is not there see now what I will do to it,’ and taking the lighted stick of sealing-wax, he pressed it actually against the face of the Angel, and smeared it with the smoking, burning stuff. Dear sirs, you must not blame me if I cannot attempt to describe to you what now happened when the official poured the burning wax on the Angel’s face, and, cruel man, raised the icon that he might boast that he found a means of annoying us. I only remember that the beautiful face of the Angel was red, and melted olive oil ran down in two streams from underneath the seal, like tears and blood.

“We all groaned and, shutting our eyes, fell on the ground as if we were under torture. And while we were lamenting dark night came

upon us, and in the midst of our grief for the loss of our sealed Angel, here in the darkness and silence the thought struck us—we will follow wheresoever our Guardian Angel is taken, and we swear to steal him, even risking our lives in order to unseal him, and for this purpose we chose out a young man called Levontia. He was quite young, not more than seventeen, but well-grown, kind-hearted, and a Believer from his childhood upwards. He was also docile and amiable, and as easily guided as a fine white horse on a silver bridle. I could not have wished for a better agent in such a dangerous affair of following and seizing the Angel, whose blinded countenance was to us such a source of terrible grief.

CHAPTER IX

“I WILL not trouble you with all the details of our endeavours to reach our end. We had to pass through difficulties as hard to meet as to go through the eye of a needle; but I will at once begin to tell you of the misfortune which overtook us, and our grief when we knew that our icons which had been carried hanging on a rod were stowed away in a cellar by the Church Council. They were buried as

it were in a tomb, and we could do nothing about them. However, we were glad to hear that the Bishop himself had not approved of such savage treatment of the icons; but, on the contrary, had said, 'Why was this done?' and he even spoke for the ancient works of art and said, 'These belonged to our forefathers, and ought to be preserved.' But strange to say, greater trouble came out of his opinion than out of the insults the icon had formerly received; for the Bishop, I must confess with a kindly feeling, looked long and attentively at our sealed Angel, and then turned and said, 'What a wonderful expression; how terrible that it should have been injured. Do not store this icon,' said he, 'in the cellar, but place it on the altar in my chapel by the crucifix.' This the servants of the Bishop did, fulfilling his order, but I must tell you that this attention of the Bishop, though it was gratifying on the one hand, was annoying on the other, because we knew that it was now impossible to carry out our intention of stealing the Angel. Another way occurred to us; to bribe the servants of the Bishop, and with their help to substitute another icon corresponding exactly with it. In this our Old Believers had succeeded more than once, but it would have

been necessary to have the picture painted by a skilful and experienced hand ; but we foresaw that we could not find such an artist in this place. There now fell on us all a double grief which came like a water-spout on bare skin ; in the chamber where only prayers had resounded, now echoed cries and laments, and in a short time we were faint from grief and could hardly see the ground under us, for our eyes were full of tears. Whether our weeping caused this or not we were soon all suffering from a disease of the eyes, and no remedies seemed to cure it, and a rumour went through all the working people that this was brought about on account of the Angel of the Old Believers. ‘They blinded him with their sealing, and now we are all getting blind,’ said they ; and such a rumour went amongst not only ourselves, but through the Orthodox Believers : and though the English architect sent for doctors no one would go to them, nor take their medicine, but they only cried out, ‘Bring us here our sealed Angel, for we want to pray to him, for he alone can heal us.’ The Englishman took great trouble about this business, and went to the Bishop himself and said, ‘Such and such things have happened, very reverend sir ; faith is a great thing, and he that believes,

to him shall be given according to his faith. Send over to our shore the sealed Angel.' But the Church dignitary would not listen, and answered, 'They ought not to say their prayers to him.' This seemed to us a cruel decision, and we condemned the Bishop with many hard words; but later on it was revealed to us that all this happened not out of ill-will, but by Divine Providence. In the meantime signs were not wanting that the finger of avenging wrath sought out on that shore the very chiefest sinner in this affair—I mean Pemen, who ran away from us after our misfortune and joined the Orthodox Church. I met him once in the town, and he bowed to me, and I bowed to him, and then he spoke. 'I regret, brother Mark, that while I was with you I did not belong to the right Church.' And I answered, 'As to the matter of faith, that is in God's hands, but that you, wretched man, betrayed us for an old shoe, that of course was very bad; and forgive me, but I must rebuke you for this as the prophet Amos commands.' At the name of the prophet he trembled. 'Don't speak to me,' he said, 'of prophets; I remember the Scriptures, and I feel that the prophets torment those living on the earth, and I even have a sign of it myself.' And he complained to me

that a few days before he had bathed in the river, and after that his body came out all piebald, and he laid bare his breast to show me, and I saw that he was all spotted like a pied horse from his breast upward to his neck. Then I nearly told him what was in my mind, 'God stamps a rogue,' as the saying is. But I restrained myself and did not utter the words, but said, 'Pray rather and rejoice that you have this hall-mark on you now on earth; perhaps you will be purified in this world for another.' He began to weep, and to tell me how much he would lose by this misfortune if the spots appeared on his face. It seemed that when he joined the Church the Governor had been much struck by his good looks, and said to the Mayor of the town that when some distinguished persons came to the town they must certainly choose Pemen to carry the silver salver with the offering of bread and salt. 'But who would send a piebald man with the offerings?' But I did not care to listen to his worldly vain talk, and I turned away and left him. And thus we separated entirely from him. The marks of wrath on him became still clearer. Many disasters also visited us; the worst happened in the autumn when, after the ice had formed, a sudden thaw set in, the ice was all

broken up, and dashing against our masonry injured it. One of our granite piers was suddenly carried away, and the swirl of waters destroyed the labours of many years which had cost many thousands of roubles.

“Our English architect was struck by these misfortunes, but he would not listen to the proposal made to him that he should send us Old Believers away; but as he was a kind-hearted man, he sent for me and for Luke, and said, ‘Advise me, boys, what to do; can I not help or console you in some way?’ But we answered, ‘Until the face of our holy Angel who ever went before us, the face sealed with pitch, is restored to us we cannot be comforted, but shall pine away with grief.’

“‘And what do you intend to do?’ said he.

“‘We intend to substitute a modern picture for the ancient one, and to unseal the pure face defiled by the impious official hands.’

“‘Is he so dear to you, and can no other take his place?’

“‘He is dear to us,’ I answered, ‘for he has preserved us, and no other can replace him, for he was painted in the good old days by a pious hand, and consecrated by an ancient priest with the full ritual of Peter the Tomb, but now we have no priests and no ritual.’ ‘And how,’

said he, 'will you restore the face now burnt by the sealing-wax?' 'As to that, your honour, do not trouble yourself. If we can only get him into our possession our Guardian Angel will take care of himself. This icon does not come out of a shop, but is the real work of an artist. The oil is so prepared that it preserves the picture, which will not fear the brand of fire nor the touch of pitch.'

"'You are sure of this?' 'Quite sure; the oil is as strong as the old Russian faith.' Then he began to abuse the persons who did not know how to take care of valuable treasures; then he shook hands with us, and added, 'Don't grieve any longer, I will help you. Must you have the icon for any length of time?' 'No,' we said, 'only for a short time.' 'Very well then, I will say that I want to have a rich gilt setting made for the icon, and they will lend it to me, and we will then substitute another icon for that one.' We thanked him, but said, 'Do not bring the icon to-morrow, nor the day after.' 'Why,' said he. We answered, 'Because before we get the icon we must have another ready as like it as two drops of water, but we cannot find such a work of art either here or in this neighbourhood.' 'Nonsense,' said he; 'I will

send for an artist from the town who can not only copy well, but is able to take portraits admirably.' 'No,' said we, 'we cannot let you do that—first, because if you sent for an artist, a rumour of it would spread at once; secondly, because such an artist could not do the work required.' The Englishman would not believe this, and then I explained to him that the style of painting now was quite different. 'The oil paints now used are coarser than the old medium of white of egg. The brushes used are larger, and the picture must be looked at from a distance to give the effect. But the old paintings are finer in touch, like miniatures. The drawing, too, is different, for the modern artist is taught to follow the type of man he sees. But the old painter of icons imagined such types as belonged to the dwellers in heaven. A worldly-minded artist could never portray such celestial beings.' He was interested in my account, and asked 'Where, then, can we now find such imaginative artists?' 'They are very rare now' (for at that date they were carefully hidden away by the Old Believers). 'There is an artist in the town of Matera, Koklov by name, but he is very old, and could not take a long journey; and in Palekov there are two men,

but it is very doubtful whether they also could come. But even if they could come, they are not the artists that we require.' 'Why won't these do either?' And I answered, 'Because they have not the gift for that kind of work. The design of the artist in Matera is a bit heavy about the head, and his colouring is muddy, and the artist in Palekov paints everything blue.' 'How, then, shall we manage?' said he. I answered, 'I really do not know; there is still an excellent artist in Moscow. He is known all over Russia, but he paints more in the style of Novgorod and of holy Moscow; but our icon is painted in the Stroganov manner in the brightest and purest tints, and this only one artist can reproduce, Sebastian, from the low country. But he travels a great deal, and wanders all through Russia painting for the Old Believers; but where to find him I know not.'

"The Englishman listened with interest to my explanation, and smiled and answered: 'It is surprising how interesting it is to listen to you workmen, who not only know your own trade well but are cultivated in matters of art and taste.' 'Oh, sir, how should we not know something about art, for painting is a divine work, and some of our simplest peasants

are such admirers of it that they can distinguish between the different schools of painting, and tell you which were from Matera and which from Novgorod, or from the Volga, or from Siberia or Stroganov, and can even distinguish without a mistake the masterpieces of the well-known painters of ancient times.' 'Is it possible?' said he. 'Yes, indeed, just as you can distinguish between one person's handwriting and another's, so they will look and say, "That is by Kuzma, Andrew, or Procopia." 'By what signs?' 'There is a difference in the drawing, in the treatment, in the fusion of colours, in the lack of certain things, in the disposition of the limbs, and in the animation of the features.' He listened, and I told him what I knew of various painters whose icons our honoured Czars and princes had given as a blessing to their children, and our Czars had commanded the priests to preserve these icons as the apple of their eye.

"The Englishman at once took out his notebook and asked: 'Tell me the names of the artists and where their works may be seen?' 'You would search for them in vain,' said I, 'the memory of them has perished.' 'Where are they gone?' he said. 'I don't know; perhaps the Germans have exchanged them for

pipes or tobacco.' 'Impossible,' said he. 'On the contrary,' I answered, 'it is quite possible, and I can quote an example. There are door panels in the Vatican in Rome which were painted by our Russian artists in the thirteenth century, and these excellent miniature paintings are so striking that the greatest foreign artists, beholding them, are full of enthusiasm at their wonderful excellence.' 'And how did they get to Rome?' 'Peter the Great gave them to a foreign monk, and he sold them.'

"The Englishman smiled thoughtfully, and then muttered softly: 'In England we have fine pictures, but they are carefully preserved and handed down from one generation to another, and therefore you can accurately trace their genealogy.' 'It is not so with us,' I said, 'for the links with our forefathers are broken in order that all may be made new, as if the Russian race only existed from yesterday, and had sprung out of a bed of nettles.' 'Are your people indeed so ignorant that there are not some who love the ancient works of art and would try to preserve them?' 'There are none, dear sir, who care to preserve them, for the new schools of art have everywhere destroyed the old feeling and replaced it by the vanity of intellectual display. The lofty

inspired type is lost, and everything is earthly and breathes of earthly passion. Our modern artists paint the Archangel Michael like Prince Potemkin, and give Jesus Christ the countenance of a Jew. What can you expect from such people? It seems that their uncircumcised hearts can neither imagine nor portray what is divine, just as in Egypt they looked on the ox and the red-winged ibis as divine. But we neither bow down to strange gods nor paint the Saviour as a Jew, but these modern icons, however well painted, we consider frigid and uninspired and unsanctified, and turn away from them to the holy traditions of our forefathers, for the distraction of the eye by vanity ruins the purity of the mind just as a polluted stream ruins the fountain.'

"When I had finished and was silent, the Englishman said, 'Go on, I am interested in what you tell me'; and I answered, 'But I cannot tell you more.' But he insisted: 'Yes, you can tell me more; I want to know what you mean by an inspired picture.' The question, dear sir, was a difficult one for a simple peasant to answer; nevertheless I described to him how the picture of the starry heaven was painted in Novgorod. Then I told him of the picture painted at Kiev, which is in the cathedral of

St. Sophia, where the seven-winged archangels stand by the side of the God of Sabaoth, but of course they are not like Prince Potemkin, and on the walls of the entrance are prophets and patriarchs. On the lower step is Moses with the Tables of the Law, still lower is Aaron wearing a mitre, and with the rod that budded; on the other steps are King David with a cross, Isaiah with a scroll, and Ezekiel with the closed gates, Daniel with the furnace, and figures round them pointing the road to Heaven. The talents are painted by which man can reach that glorious goal. These are they: the book with seven seals is the gift of wisdom; the seven-branched candlestick is the gift of judgment; the seven eyes are the gift of good counsel; the seven trumpets are the gift of strength; the right hand in the midst of seven stars is the gift of vision; the seven censers are the gift of piety; the seven lightnings are the gift of the fear of God: such pictures, I say, bring comfort to the soul.' But the Englishman answered, 'Forgive me, I don't understand you; why do you call these pictures elevating?' 'Because such pictures clearly speak to the soul, for it behoves a Christian to pray and to yearn that he may be carried away from earth to behold the un-

speakable glory of God.' 'Of course it is so,' he said, 'everyone can understand that from the holy writings and from the services.' 'No,' I said, 'everyone cannot understand; it is not given to everyone to understand the Scriptures, and to the uneducated man there are obscure things in the services, for one hears the words *great and rich mercy*, and immediately he thinks that this means about money, and he greedily prays for this. But when he sees a representation of the glory of heaven, and can imagine to himself the highest view of life, and understands that he must endeavour to reach that goal, for here it appears to him simple and intelligible, then that man will pray first of all, as a gift, to have the fear of God, and his soul will at once rise with ease from step to step gaining each time an abundance of the highest gifts, and then he will look upon gold and all earthly glory as things not worth praying for and as vile before God.'

"Here the Englishman stood up and asked gaily: 'And what are all you Old Believers, you funny people, praying for?' 'We pray,' I answered, 'for a Christian death-bed, and a good conscience at the Day of Judgment.'

"He smiled, and suddenly pulled the gold cord of a curtain, and behind the curtain sat his

English wife, knitting with long needles by a candle. She was a beautiful lady with kindly manners, and though she could not talk our language much, she understood everything, and no doubt wished to hear our conversation with her husband about religion. And what do you think happened? When the curtain which hid her was drawn back, she stood up at once as if much moved, and came, dear lady, to me and to Luke, stretching out her hands to us, peasants; tears were in her eyes as she pressed our hands and said, 'Good people, good Russian people.' When Luke and I heard her kind words we kissed her hands, and she laid her lips on our peasant heads."

The narrator paused, and hid his eyes with his sleeve, then gently wiped them and whispered, "A feeling lady," then recovering himself he went on: "After this kindly behaviour the lady began to say something to her husband, but of course we could not understand what she said, but we gathered from the tones of her voice that she was interceding for us. The Englishman, who was evidently pleased at his wife's kindness, looked at her with pride, and laid his hand on her head caressingly, and crooned like a pigeon to

himself: 'Good, good,' or something like that, and we could see that he was praising her and reassuring her, and then he went off to his desk and took out two hundred rouble notes and said: 'Here, Luke, is money, go and seek out some skilled painter who can give you what you need, and let him paint for my wife after your manner an icon which she wishes to give to her son, and my wife gives you this money to pay all the expenses.' But she, through her tears, smiled and said hastily: 'No, no, *he* gives you this, but I will add something,' and she left the room and returned quickly with another hundred rouble note in her hand. 'My husband gave me this to buy a new dress, but I don't want a dress, and would rather give it to you.'

"We of course refused at first, but she would not listen to us and ran away, and he said, 'Don't attempt to refuse her, but take what she gives'; then he too left us, saying, 'Away with you, my dear good people.' But we of course were not offended by this curt dismissal from the Englishman, for we understood that he had done this to hide his feelings. And that is how it was, dear sirs, that our own kinsfolk brought misery to us, and these English strangers comforted us, and put into

our souls such eagerness as if we had just had a bath of real life.

“Now begins, dear sirs, the other part of my story in mid-Whitsuntide, and I will tell it as shortly as possible; how, taking the docile Levontia, I went to seek an artist. I will also tell what places we passed through, what people we saw, what new wonders were manifested to us, what at last we found, what we lost, and what we brought back.

CHAPTER X

“It is important to a traveller to have a good comrade with him on his journey, for hunger and cold are more easily borne when shared with a kind and intelligent companion. This comfort was given to me by the strange youth Levontia. We started on foot with our knapsacks and a sufficient sum of money, and to safeguard us we had a short sword with a broad handle which we had always kept in case of danger. We gave out that we were travelling merchants, and invented details of our business when inquiries were made, but of course we were really occupied with our own affair. We stopped first for a while at Klinza and Zlinka, then we visited some of our

brethren at Orla, but not finding what we required in these towns, for there were no skilful artists in them, we passed on to Moscow. But what shall I say? Oh, Moscow, Moscow! thou glorious queen of the ancient Russian race, yet we, the Old Believers, found no comfort in thee. I do not like to confess, and yet I cannot be silent, but we did not find in Moscow that inspired art for which we yearned. We found that there the Old Faith did not consist in piety and a godly life, but only in obstinate adherence to tradition, and the longer we stayed the more we were convinced of this. We were ashamed to confess it to each other, but we both saw that the true Old Believers had no place here, but would daily be scandalised. This shameful fact, however, we at first kept each in his own breast.

“Of course we found many skilful artists in Moscow, but this did not profit us when the inspiration was wanting which breathed in the works of the old masters. In former days when an artist devoted himself to painting sacred pictures, he fasted and prayed and then toiled in solitude with the same zeal, whether it were for much money or for little, as the dignity of this work requires. But here an order

is painted in one way for one man, in another way for someone else, according to the price paid; a flimsy style of picture is produced which could not last long; the ground is soft chalk, not alabaster, and the artist spreads one thin coat of paint, not four or five coats as was done of old; this produced the tender tints which are not seen nowadays. And besides the want of accuracy in drawing, the artists, though so inferior, pride themselves on their own work, and cry down all the others. Or what is still worse, they join together in cliques to defraud the public; they meet at restaurants to drink and praise their own work with proud presumption, while they sacrilegiously call the work of another 'hell-painted.' Round them gather always, like crows and old owls, the sellers of counterfeit ancient pictures, which pass from hand to hand, and are made up with old boards, rotten here, worm-eaten there. Then they make the settings in brass, following the old designs, and making the enamel look as if it were really old. They change basins into fonts, and ornament them with eagles, to imitate the old ones of the time of Ivan the Terrible, and thus they defraud the inexperienced Old Believer, and persuade him that he is buying a real antique.

All this is fraud and disgraceful deception. In a word, they behave like swarthy gipsies who trade in horses, and cheat and sell without shame. After this fashion did the painters of holy icons work, and to see this going on before our eyes was a shame and a disgrace to us. But to those who were accustomed to such practices it mattered nothing. They were even interested in the different styles of imitation, and would boast that they had cheated some buyers by supplying a fraudulent imitation of St. Denis, or a Virgin, or some other saint; and they all vied with each other in cheating ignorant pious Believers. As Levontia and I were simple peasant Believers, all this was insupportable, and we were so thoroughly disgusted that a fear overcame us; is it possible that our ancient Faith has become so corrupt? I said this to myself, but I saw that Levontia also had the same thought in his mind; we did not openly confess this to each other, but I saw that Levontia sought to be alone. One day I looked at him and I thought, can he bear this much longer? and I said: 'Levontia, you seem to be worried about something.' 'No,' said he, 'there is nothing the matter with me.' 'Let us go,' said I, 'to the

restaurant in B. Street and have a talk with the artists there.' 'No, thank you, Uncle; you go alone, I had rather not.' 'And why won't you go?' I asked. He answered: 'I don't feel up to going.' I did not like to force him to go, so I went alone once and again, but the third time I called him to go with me. 'Come with me, my dear boy.' But he refused politely. 'No, thank you; please excuse me, and let me stay at home.' 'But, Levontia, you came with me to be my fellow-worker, and yet you persist in staying at home. You are not giving me the help I expected from you.' 'Dear Uncle, dear friend, don't ask me to go where they eat and drink, and talk scandal about holy icons, and might lead me into doubts.' This was the first time he confessed his feelings about the matter, and I was struck to the heart by what he said, and I urged him no longer but went alone. That evening I had a long talk with two painters, and was much shocked by them. One of them sold me an icon for forty roubles and went away. The other painter said, 'You won't care to offer prayers before this icon.' 'Why not?' said I. 'Because,' said he, 'it is hell-painted'; and then with his nail he scratched, and a layer of the paint flew off

from one corner, and on the background below was painted a devil with a tail. He rubbed away another piece and another devil appeared. 'Good heavens!' I cried, 'what does this mean?' 'It means that you must give your order to me and not to him.' Then I saw clearly that these men had plotted together to play me a nasty trick, and, leaving behind me the icon, I went out with my eyes full of tears, but thanking God that Levontia, whose faith had received a shock, had not seen this. As soon as I got home I saw that there was no light in the window of the room we rented, but a gentle tender stream of song poured forth. I knew at once that the sweet voice was the voice of Levontia, and he sang with such feeling that each word seemed bathed in tears. I entered softly that he might not hear me, and stood by the door and listened while he sang the lament of Joseph:

"To whom shall I sing my grief,
To whom shall I utter my sobs."

These verses were so full of sadness that it was impossible to hear them unmoved, and Levontia himself sang and wept and sobbed:

"That I am betrayed by my brethren."

And he wept, and he wept, singing of Joseph

seeing his mother's grave, and calling upon the earth to lament the sin of his brethren. These words are always sufficient to agitate anyone, but especially myself at that time when I had just escaped evil treatment from my fellow Believers. I was so moved that I myself sobbed, and Levontia hearing me, stopped singing, and called to me, 'Uncle, dear Uncle!' 'What is it,' I said, 'my dear boy?' 'Do you know,' said he, 'who is the mother mentioned in the song?' 'Rachel,' I answered. 'No,' said he, 'it was Rachel in old times, but now it must be understood in a mystic sense.' 'What do you mean by a mystic sense?' I asked. 'I mean that this word must now be understood in a different sense.' 'Take care, my boy,' said I, 'is it not dangerous to use your own interpretation?' 'No,' said he; 'I feel in my heart that Christ was crucified for us that we might seek Him with one accord with lips and hearts.' But fear fell on me as to his meaning, and I said, 'Let us get out of Moscow quickly, dear boy, and let us seek the painter Sebastian in the district of Nidjni Novgorod, for I hear he has gone thither.' 'Let us go,' he answered, 'for here in Moscow I cannot breathe freely, but out in the country are woods and purer air, and I have heard that

the hermit Pamba lives in that part; he is an old man free from sin and envy, and I would fain see him.' 'What have we to do with the old man Pamba?' I answered in a severe tone; 'he is a follower of the State Church.' 'Well, there is no harm in my seeing him. I want to see him that I may understand what is the grace that is given by the State Church.' Then I scolded him, repeating, 'What grace can there be in the State Church?' but all the time I felt he was more in the right than I was, because he was anxious to examine, whilst I denied everything that I was ignorant of, and was obstinate in my resistance and talked foolishly. 'The Orthodox Church,' I said, 'do not trust in the Divine guidance, but look to the teaching of Aristotle and to the star of the pagan god Remphan when they voyage on the sea; do you wish to study their point of view?' And he answered, 'You are mistaken, Uncle, there never was a god Remphan,¹ but all is arranged by the Divine Providence.' And I spoke still more stupidly and said, 'The Orthodox people drink coffee.' 'And what harm is there in that?' he answered; 'coffee is a bean, and King David received it as a gift.' 'Where did you read that?' I

¹ Acts vii. 43.

asked. 'I read it in books,' he answered. 'But everything is not written in books,' I replied. 'And what is not written?' he asked. Well, now I did not know what to answer, so I made another objection. 'The Orthodox people eat hare, but that is not lawful.' 'What! it is not lawful,' he said; 'that is an error, it is created by God.' 'Now,' said I, 'would you not renounce the hare, when it is an unclean beast, with a donkey's nature, and breeds in man a thick and melancholy blood?' But Levontia laughed and said, 'Go to sleep, Uncle; you are repeating silly stuff.' I must tell you that I did not yet guess what was working in the mind of this gifted youth, but I was very glad that he did not wish to talk any longer, for I knew in my heart that I was talking of things I did not understand. Then I lay down and was silent; only I resolved not to speak to him for a time on our journey, so as to show him that I was much displeased. But I was not strong-minded enough to continue steadfast in my resolve, and I soon began to talk to him as usual, only not about religion, for he was far more learned than I was. We talked about the country we were passing through, for each hour gave us fresh matter for observation in the great dark forests through

which our path lay. I tried to forget the conversation I had had with him in Moscow, and determined to be on the watch to prevent our seeking out the hermit Pamba, whose fame had so strongly attracted Levontia, and of whom I myself had heard from Orthodox people of the wonders he had worked by his lofty piety. But, I thought to myself, there is no need to worry; if we avoid him he won't run after us.

“Thus we travelled on quickly and safely, and we came at length to the district which was our goal, and the rumour reached us that the artist Sebastian was wandering here; and we went from town to town, and village to village, seeking him, and we were often close on his heels but never came up to him. After we had gone twenty or thirty versts without resting, like hounds on a scent, we were told that he had been there but had left an hour before. On we went, but we did not overtake him. After one of these fruitless searches, one day quite suddenly Levontia and I disputed which road to take. I said, ‘Let us go to the right,’ and he insisted we should go to the left. He nearly persuaded me, but still I insisted on having my way. Well, on and on we went, but at last I saw that we had lost

our way, for no path or track could be seen, and I said to the youth, 'Let us turn back.' But he replied, 'No, Uncle, I cannot go back ; I have no more strength.' I was uneasy. 'What ails you, boy?' I asked. 'Don't you see that I am quite giddy?' And in truth I saw now that he was trembling, and his eyes had a look of vacancy. How suddenly all this had happened. He had not complained before, but had marched bravely, and now all at once he sank down on the grass in the wood, and leant his head on the stump of a tree, crying, 'Oh my head, my head ; it burns like fire. I cannot walk, I cannot go a step farther.' Poor fellow ; he sank down on the ground and lay there.

"This happened in the evening. I was terribly frightened, and while we waited there to see if he would recover, night drew on. It was autumn ; we were in the dark in a strange place : around us were only firs and mighty pines, patriarchs of the forest, and the boy seemed to be dying. What was I to do ? My eyes were full of tears as I said, 'Could you rouse yourself, dear boy, that we might seek shelter for the night ?' But his head drooped like a flower cut down by the scythe, and he muttered, as if in a dream, 'Do not touch me,

Uncle Mark; do not touch me, but fear nothing.' 'How can I help being afraid in this lonely spot?' He only said, 'Do not sleep, but keep watch.' I thought to myself, 'Good heavens! what shall I do with him?' But in the midst of my fear I began to listen. Far off in the wood I heard a crackling; then I thought it might be a wild beast, and that he would destroy us at once. I said nothing to Levontia, for I saw that his mind seemed to be wandering, so I only prayed, 'Christ Angel, preserve us in this terrible hour!' Then I heard the crackling come nearer and nearer, and something seemed approaching; and now I must confess to you, sirs, what a cowardly fellow I was. I was so frightened that I left Levontia lying there in pain, but I, like a squirrel, ran up into a tree. I drew out my sword and sat on a branch, and looked to see what would happen, with my teeth chattering like a frightened wolf. And suddenly I saw in the darkness, to which my eyes were now accustomed, that something was coming out of the wood, but I could not at first distinguish whether it were a wild beast or a robber; but at last I was able to discover that it was neither a wild beast nor a robber, but a little old man in a nightcap. I observed also that he carried an axe in his girdle, and

on his back a great bundle of wood, and he was going towards the clearing in the forest. He sniffed the air several times like a dog on the scent. And suddenly he threw his bundle on the ground, and, as if he had smelt the presence of a man, he went straight up to my companion. He bent down, he looked him in the face, and took him by the hand and said, 'Get up, brother'; and what do you think happened? I saw him raise Levontia; he then took him straight to the bundle of wood, and bound it on his shoulders and said, 'Carry this for me,' and Levontia carried it.

CHAPTER XI

"You may imagine, dear sirs, how frightened I was by such a miracle. Whence had this imperious, quiet old man come, and how could he at once give vigour to Leva, who had seemed at the point of death, and who could not raise his head, but now was able to carry a bundle of wood? I jumped quickly from the tree and threw my sword over my shoulder. I broke off a young sapling as a further defence, and went after them. I overtook them quickly, and saw the old man in front looking bent and small as I saw him before. His beard was

white like the foam of soap, and my Levontia went after him, and his steps followed boldly in the footsteps of the old man. Though I spoke to him and touched his arm, he paid no attention to me, but walked as if in his sleep. Then I ran to the old man's side and said, 'My dear good man.' 'What do you want?' he asked. 'Where are you leading us?' I said. 'I never lead anyone anywhere; it is the Lord who leadeth every man.' And saying this he suddenly stopped; and I saw in front of us a wall and a large door, and a little door cut in it, and the old man began to knock at the door and cry out, 'Brother Meron! Hi! Brother Meron!' Then a gruff harsh voice answered: 'You come again so late at night, go and sleep in the wood. I will not let you in.' Then the old man pleaded gently and besought to be let in. 'Brother, open the door.' Then the gruff old man suddenly opened the door, and he wore the same kind of nightcap as the first one, but he was rough and coarse; and the little old man had scarcely crossed the threshold than the doorkeeper gave him a push which nearly threw him down, yet he answered, 'God save thee, brother, and requite thee for thy service.' 'Good heavens,' I thought, 'what place is this

we have come to?’ And suddenly it flashed upon me and I understood. ‘Have we not found the meek recluse Pamba? It would have been better,’ I thought, ‘to have got lost in the thick forest, or killed by a wild beast, or have fallen into a den of robbers, than to have come under his roof.’ He led us into a small hut, and lighted a yellow wax candle, and then I soon realised that we were in the hermit’s dwelling, and I could restrain myself no longer. ‘Forgive me, pious man,’ I exclaimed, ‘is it proper that I and my companion should stay in this place where you have led us?’ And he answered, ‘The whole earth is the Lord’s, and blessed are those that dwell therein. Lie down and sleep.’ ‘But,’ said I, ‘let me explain to you that we belong to the Old Believers.’ ‘All,’ he answered, ‘are one body in Christ; He will unite us all.’ He then led us into a corner where he had a humble narrow couch of matting on the floor, with a log of wood for a bolster and straw for a covering, and again he murmured, ‘Sleep.’ Then Levontia, like an obedient youth, sank down on the couch; but I, mindful of his danger, said, ‘Holy man, forgive me for asking one more question.’ And he answered, ‘Why ask questions? God knows all.’ ‘Tell

me your name,' I said. But he, as if wishing to avoid answering, repeated playfully an old wives' saying: 'They call me what they call me,' and with these idle words he slipped with his candle into a small store-room, dark and narrow as a coffin, when the same gruff man suddenly called out to him, 'Don't dare to keep the light burning, you will burn the cell; you may pray out of your book in the day, but now you must pray in the dark.' 'I won't burn a light,' he answered; 'I won't burn a light, Brother Meron. God preserve you.' And he blew out the light. I whispered to him, 'Father, who is it who threatens you so harshly?' and he answered, 'That is my servant Meron, a good fellow; he takes care of me.' Good heavens, I think, this is the hermit Pamba, there is no other like him, so free from envy and anger. Here's a disaster! He will convert us and corrupt us; there is only one thing to do, and that is to fly from here early to-morrow morning at dawn and snatch Levontia away, that Pamba may not know where we have gone. Having made this plan I lay down, but not to sleep, but to watch for the first light in order to wake up the youth, and to fly. But in order not to dose or to sleep, I began to repeat the Belief, as was ordained of

old, and as soon as I had said it I went on directly to say, 'This is the Apostolic Faith, the Catholic Faith, this is the inspired Faith which I affirm,' and then I began over again. I don't know how many times I had repeated the Belief, but certainly many times in order to keep awake; but the old man all the time was praying in his cell, and through the chinks of the laths a light seemed to gleam, and I saw how he was bowed in prayer, and then I suddenly seemed to hear a conversation beginning. I cannot explain how it was, but it seemed as if Levontia had gone in to the old man, and they were talking about faith, but without words, as if they looked at one another and understood each other. I was so taken up by this that I forgot to repeat the Belief; and as I listened the old man seemed to say to the youth, 'Come, purify yourself,' and he answered, 'I will be purified.' I cannot tell you whether all this was in a dream or not in a dream, but I must have slept for a long time, for when I awoke at length I saw that it was bright morning, and the old man, our host, the hermit, sat and was working at bast shoes which lay on his knees. I observed him carefully. Oh, how pious he was, how inspired; he sat just like an angel before me and plaited

the shoes. As I looked at him I saw that he was looking at me and smiling, and he said, 'You have slept enough, Mark ; now it is time to work.' I answered, 'Oh, man of God, tell me what is my work ; do not you know everything?' 'I know this,' he said, 'would a man travel so far if he had not an object for his journey? All roads, my brother, all roads seek the Lord ; may the Lord help your humility.' 'Where is my humility, holy man?' said I ; 'you are humble, but what humility can I have in the midst of the world's vanity?' And he answered, 'Oh, brother, I am not at peace, I am very bold. I want a portion in the heavenly kingdom.' Then suddenly, mindful of his sins, he clasped his hands and wept like a little child. 'O Lord,' he prayed, 'be not angry at my wilfulness ; send me into the depths of hell, and let the devils torment me as I deserve.' 'Glory to God,' I thought, 'this cannot be the sagacious hermit Pamba ; this is simply an old man whose brain is diseased.' For I reflected, 'how could a man in his senses give up his share in the kingdom of heaven and pray that God would send him below to be tormented by devils?' I never heard of such a wish in all my life, and could only think he

was out of his mind, and therefore turned away from the old man's tears, deeming that his diseased brain had made him a devil-worshipper. At length I asked myself, 'Why am I lying here; it is time to get up.' Then I suddenly saw that the door opened and Levontia came in. I had completely forgotten him. He at once fell at the feet of the old man, and said, 'Father, all is finished, now bless me.' The old man looked at him and answered, 'Peace be with thee, rest.' Then I saw that my youth again bowed down to the earth and went out, and the hermit began to plait his bast shoes. I jumped up and thought to myself, 'I will take Levontia away from here without stopping to look back,' and I went out at once into the little passage and saw that my youth was lying there on a wooden bench without any support for his head. He lay at full length, with his hands clasped on his breast. I would not let him see I was frightened, so I asked him quietly, 'Do you know where I can draw some water in order to wash my face?' but I whispered to him, 'I conjure you by the living God let us get away from here quickly.' But, looking at him more closely, I saw that Levontia no longer breathed. He had passed away, he had

died. My voice sounded strange as I shouted out, 'Pamba, Father Pamba, you have killed my boy!' But Pamba appeared quietly on the threshold, and said in a joyful tone, 'Our Leva has flown above.' Then anger seized me. 'Yes,' I answered through my tears, 'he has flown above; you have let his soul fly out like a dove from a cage. He is gone.' And I turned towards the dead youth, and wept and groaned over him till evening, when monks came out of the monastery. They washed him and laid him in a coffin and carried him off. For that morning, while I slept soundly, he had been received into the Orthodox Church.

"I said not a word more to Father Pamba, for what could I say to him? If I spoke harshly to him he would bless me, if I struck him he would bow down to the earth. Such a peace-loving man was invincible. Who could terrify such a man when he himself had asked to be sent to hell? No, it was in vain that I threatened him that he would corrupt us like a festering wound. His peaceful soul would either drive out all the demons from hell or would return to God. They would begin to torment, and he would say, 'Torture me harder, for I deserve it.' No, no; even Satan himself

could not withstand this humble spirit. Satan would beat down all the hands lifted against his victim; Satan would tear away all the claws, and would throw himself helpless before the Creator, lying ashamed before him, and overcome by such love. Thus I meditated, and decided that this old man with his bast shoe had been created to overcome hell. I wandered in the wood all the night, not knowing how far I went, and I thought to myself after what manner doth he pray, with what icon and with what books? Then I remembered that I had seen no icon in his hut, only a cross made of twigs and bound with bast. I did not even see any large books. 'O Lord, how can I dare to judge this man; if only there are even two such men in the Orthodox Church then the Old Believers are doomed, because this man is all love.' I pondered over all this, and suddenly towards morning I began to yearn for one moment's sight of him before my departure. Just as these thoughts passed through my mind I heard the same sound of crackling as once before, and suddenly Father Pamba appeared with an axe and a bundle of wood, and said, 'Why do you delay longer? Go, hasten to build up Babylon.' This seemed very bitter to me, and I replied, 'Why do

you reproach me, old man, with these words? I never built any Babylon, and I withdraw myself from Babylonish abomination.' And he answered, 'What does Babylon mean? A pillar of pride. Don't pride yourself on your righteousness, or the Angel will forsake you.' And I said, 'Father, do you know why I am wandering here?' Then I told him about all our misfortunes, and he listened to it all. He listened, and he answered, 'The Angel is meek, the Angel is humble; what the Lord will tell him he will do. This is what an Angel means: he lives in the soul of man, he is sealed up by the vanity of knowledge, but love breaks the seal.' Saying this he left me, but I could not turn away my eyes from him. I was quite overcome, and bowed to the ground to him, but when I rose up I saw that he was no longer there; either he had gone among the trees or . . . God knows whither he went.

"Now I began to think over his words. 'What did they mean?' 'The Angel lives in the soul, and is sealed up, but love sets him free.' Then suddenly I thought, 'But supposing he himself is the Angel, and God allows him to appear to me in a vision, I shall die like Levontia.' Having made this guess I cannot tell how it happened, nor on what log I floated

across the river and began my flight; I went sixty versts without stopping, full of fear lest it was the Angel I had really seen. And suddenly I came to a village, and found the painter Sebastian was there. I at once talked over the matter with him, and we arranged to start the next morning. But we were on cold terms, and we were on still colder terms on our journey. But why was this? Perhaps because the painter Sebastian was a melancholy man, and perhaps still more because I could not shake off the thoughts of the hermit Pamba; and my lips whispered the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The spirit of God is in the nostrils of this man.'

CHAPTER XII

"WE managed our return journey very quickly, and having got home we found everything going on all right. As soon as we had seen our own people, we straightway went to the English contractor, Jacob Jacobovitch, who was curious to see the painter and much interested in the matter. He observed the artist's hands, and shrugged his shoulders when he saw that they were bigger than pitchforks and black, for Sebastian was as dark as a gipsy. 'I am sur-

prised, brother,' he said, 'that you can draw with such hands.' 'Why not?' answered Sebastian; 'are not my hands suitable?' 'Yes, but how can you execute any delicate work?' 'Why not?' asked the artist. 'Because you cannot have flexibility in the joints of your fingers.' 'Oh, that is nothing; is it then my hands which give me permission or forbid me to work? I am their master and they are my servants, and they are obedient to me.' The Englishman smiled. 'Are you able,' said he, 'to reproduce for us the sealed Angel?' 'Why not?' answered he; 'I am not one of those artists who are afraid of their task, but my task is afraid of me. I will make a copy which you will not be able to distinguish from the original.' 'All right,' said Jacob; 'as soon, as possible we will procure for you the real icon, but in the meanwhile, in order to show me what your powers are, I want you to paint for my wife an icon in the old Russian style, such a one as will please her.' 'And what saint is the icon to be?' 'I don't know,' said he, 'I only know that whatever you paint it will be all the same if you only please her.' 'And when your wife prays to God what does she chiefly ask for?' 'I don't know, my good fellow, I really don't know, but I think prob-

ably she prays mostly for her children, that they may grow up to be good and honourable.' Sebastian was thoughtful for a moment, and then answered, 'Very well, I will paint in that style.' 'What do you mean by that style?' 'I imagine that a prayerful, contemplative countenance will most please your wife.'

"The Englishman ordered that all necessary materials were to be provided for him in his house, but Sebastian would not work there, but sat by the window in the little garret in Luke's lodging and began his work. And what he would paint, dear sirs, we could not imagine. As it was to be about children we thought that he would depict the Roman wonder-worker, to whom mothers prayed for offspring; or the massacre of the Innocents in Jerusalem, which is always pleasing to mothers who have lost their children, for there Rachel weeps with them for her children, and will not be comforted. But this wise painter realised that the Englishwoman had children and would not ask for offspring, but rather pray that they might grow up with all good moral qualities. He therefore painted a subject that would correspond with her desire. He chose for this a very small old board, a span long, and began to sketch out his creative design. First of all, of

course, he rubbed it well with strong alabaster of Kasan, so that the surface was smooth and strong like ivory. Then he divided this surface into four equal parts, and in each part he sketched out a separate tiny icon, and between them, on the ivory, he placed a line of gold, thus making each icon smaller still, and then began to paint. In the first division he painted the birth of John the forerunner. There were eight figures and the new-born child in a chamber. In the second division was the birth of the holy Virgin Mary, six figures and the new-born child in a chamber. In the third the birth of the Saviour, and the stable and the manger, and the Virgin and Joseph standing by, and the Magi bringing offerings, and the woman Salome and herds of various beasts: oxen, sheep, goats, and asses, and a land bird forbidden to the Jews, which was painted to show that Christ was sent into the world for all mankind, not to the Jews, but by God, who created all things. In the fourth division was the birth of St. Nicholas, and also the saint as a youth, and chambers with many persons standing around. And the meaning of these scenes was to bring before the eyes of the spectator the parents of such goodly offspring; and the scenes were also wonderful as works of

art, for the figures were no higher than a pin, and yet were full of life and movement. For instance, St. Anna, in the birth of the Virgin, as the Greek original has it, lies on a bed. Before her stand girls playing the timbrels; one holds gifts in her hands, another a small sun, and others have lights. One woman holds St. Anna up by the shoulders, Joachim watches in the upper chamber. The nurse washes the holy Virgin in a basin, while a maiden pours water out of a vessel into the basin. All the chambers are painted accurately as with a compass, the upper ones are greenish, but the lower ones are reddish. In this lower chamber sit Joachim and Anna on a throne, and Anna holds the holy Virgin on her knee, and around them are stone columns and golden network, and a wall snow-white and yellow.

“All this Sebastian painted in a wonderful way, and in every tiny countenance there was an expression of divine contemplation, and underneath the icon was written, ‘Goodly offspring,’ and he brought it to the English family. They looked at it, examined it closely, and each held it separately to observe it minutely. Never, they said, had they expected such imagination, and never had they heard of

such delicacy of microscopic painting. For even when they looked at it through a magnifying glass no fault could be found. And they gave Sebastian two hundred roubles for the icon, and said, 'Can you paint still more minutely?' Sebastian answered, 'I can.' Then said the Englishman, 'Paint my wife's picture on a ring.' Then Sebastian said, 'No, I cannot do that.' 'But why?' 'First of all, because I have not tried that branch of art, and secondly, I cannot lower my art in this way, for the traditions of our fathers do not allow it.' 'What nonsense is that?' 'No, it is not nonsense, for, from the blessed times of old, our fathers made this rule, and it is affirmed in the patriarchal writings, that he who devotes himself to the holy work of painting icons must not take the portraits of men, but only paint the holy icons.' Then Jacob Jacobovitch said, 'If I were to promise you three hundred roubles for it?' 'If you were to promise me five hundred thousand it would be all the same, I cannot do it.' The Englishman smiled, and said laughingly to his wife, 'How do you like hearing that he thinks it is lowering his art to paint your portrait?' But he added in English to her, 'Oh well, he is a good fellow,' and at the last he added, 'Now, my

good men, you must take care not to forget or leave undone anything necessary for the result, now that we have decided to act together.' We answered that we could not think of anything that would be likely to hinder our plan. 'Now see,' said he, 'I will begin,' and he went off to the Bishop with the request that he might have the setting of the Sealed Angel gilt and ornamented with a crown, in order to show his zeal for their religion. The Bishop would say neither Yea nor Nay; he neither granted nor refused. But Jacob Jacobovitch would not give up, and at last gained his point; and we waited like powder which might explode with the first touch of fire.

CHAPTER XIII

"You must remember that time had been running on since the beginning of my story, and that Christmas was now close at hand. But you must not think that Christmas there was like Christmas here. There the climate was most capricious; sometimes you kept the feast in wintry weather, and another time you did not know what would happen: it rained, it was damp. One day there was a slight frost and the next day there was a thaw; at one

time the river was coated with thin ice and then it was swollen with rain as if it were a spring flood. In a word, it was a most changeable time, and indeed there they don't call it weather, but weathercock.

“In the year to which my story refers this changeableness was most annoying. Since I had returned with the artist I cannot count up how many times we were first in winter and then in summer. And in regard to our work it was most irritating, for we had already got finished the seven piers, and chains had been hung from one shore to the other. Of course the contractor was very anxious to connect these chains as soon as possible, in order that some kind of temporary bridge might be hung on them before the rising of the river, in order that materials might be carried. But this could not be accomplished, only the chains were stretched across; but then a severe frost came and bound everything so suddenly, it was impossible to pave even that temporary bridge. It was left in this state; the chains were there but not the bridge. But God gave us another bridge, and the Englishman crossed the Dnieper on the ice to inquire about our icon, and when he returned he told me and Luke, ‘To-morrow, children, be on

the look-out, I will bring you your treasure.' Sirs, you cannot imagine what we felt then! At first we thought we would keep it secret and only tell the artist, but we found it quite impossible to refrain from letting the others know. Instead therefore of making it a mystery we ran about spreading the news to all our people. We knocked at every window and we whispered it from one to another; we ran from one hut to another, for it was a beautiful bright night and the frost on the snow scattered diamonds everywhere, and the star Hesper shone in the clear sky. Having spent the night in this joyful bustle we greeted the day with eager expectation, and from early morning we could not leave the artist alone; we were ready to do anything for him: to carry his boots anywhere, for the hour was approaching when everything depended on his talent. He had only to ask for anything and we rushed away to get it for him. We were so eager that we knocked each other over. Even Grandfather Maroe ran so much that in stumbling he tore off the heel of his boot. Only the artist himself was calm, because this was not the first time he had had such work to do, and because he had quietly prepared everything. He had mixed the white of egg with

kvass; he had examined the olive oil; he had prepared the canvas and the seasoned boards which were to be the height of the icon; he had got ready a sharp saw stretched like string in a bow. And he sat beside the window and rubbed on the palm of his hand the powders of those paints that he thought were likely to be wanted. And we all had a good wash and put on clean shirts, and stood on the shore looking at our city of refuge whence our radiant guest was to visit us, and our hearts beat now quick, now slow. Oh how long the day was while we waited from early morning till evening, when we suddenly saw the Englishman's sledge advancing over the ice from the town and coming straight to us! There was a wave of excitement; we all threw off our hats and prayed: 'God the Father, with the Spirit and Angel, have mercy on Thy servants.' And with this prayer we all fell on our knees on the snow and stretched out our hands with yearning. Suddenly we heard the Englishman's voice: 'Hi! you Old Believers, see what I have brought you!' and he produced a small parcel wrapped in a white handkerchief.

"Luke took the parcel, and his heart sank within him. He felt that this was something too small and too light in weight. He opened

a corner of the handkerchief and looked ; this was only the setting of the icon torn from our Angel, but it was not the icon itself. We turned to the Englishman and told him with tears, ' You are deceived ; you were only given the silver setting, but the painting isn't there.' But the Englishman was not now so well disposed to us as before. He was evidently weary of this long business, and he called out to us : ' What a mess you make of things. You told me yourselves that I was to bring the setting, and I have got it for you, but you don't seem really to know what you want.' Then, seeing that he was irritated, we began carefully to explain to him that we wanted the icon in order to make a copy of it ; but he would not listen to us any longer but drove us away. And the only favour he showed us was to order the artist to be sent to him.

"The artist Sebastian went to him but he treated him in the same manner, with the same irritation. ' Your peasants,' said he, ' don't know what they want. They asked for the setting in order to take dimensions, but now they require the icon itself to draw from. But I can do nothing more for them. The Bishop will not give up the picture. Paint the picture quickly ; we will put it in the setting and take

it back, and my secretary will substitute yours for the real icon.'

"But Sebastian, like a wise man, calmed him with 'gentle speech and answered: 'No,' said he, 'your honour, our peasants know what they are about, and we do indeed want the original icon. This is only done to annoy us; they say that we stencil our icon. There has been a certain type in the original which we are bound to follow, but the carrying out of the details is left to the artist. For instance, we must paint St. Zossima or Jerome with a lion, but the artist is allowed to exercise his fancy as to how the lion is to be represented. He must paint St. Neophyte with a dove, Timothy with a goblet, Gregory and Stralelata with lances; but every painter is free to portray these as his imagination suggests, and therefore I must know how this Angel was painted in order to be able to substitute my painting for the original.'

"The Englishman listened to all this, but drove away Sebastian as he had driven us, and there was no further help to be got from him. We sat by the river, dear sirs, like a row of crows, not knowing whether to despair altogether or to await something better; but we did not dare go to the Englishman, and indeed

the weather began to be again very unusual : a dark thaw set in, there was heavy rain, and the sky at midday was as dark as thick smoke. At night it grew still darker, and the evening star, which in December is always above the horizon, was hidden and never shone out at all. Our souls seemed to be in prison ; and thus was Christmas ushered in. On Christmas Eve the thunder growled, the lightning flashed, and for three days it poured incessantly. The snow melted everywhere and was carried into the river, and the ice in the river got blue and rose ; and on the last day of the year it broke up and was carried down at a fearful pace, heaping floe on floe in the troubled stream, and rubbing against the works of our bridge. These mountains of ice leapt and screamed like demons, I might say. It was surprising that the piers of the bridge could stand all this unforeseen pressure. A million's worth of toil might be destroyed, but we gave no heed to that, because the artist Sebastian, seeing that there was no work for him here, was packing up and preparing to leave for some other district, and we could not prevail on him to stay.

“ This fact did not trouble the Englishman, for this terrible weather had such an effect on him that he nearly went out of his mind, and

he wandered about asking everyone, 'What is to be done?' And then suddenly he mastered his anxiety and sent for Luke, and said to him, 'My good fellow, shall we go and steal your Angel?' Luke answered, 'Agreed,' and observed that the Englishman seemed to wish to plunge into some dangerous adventure, for he proposed that he should go the next morning with the artist, who was to feign to be the goldsmith, and the Englishman would ask permission for the former to see the icon that he might make a sketch of it in order to make the setting; he would thus have a good look at the icon and be able to paint a copy on his return. Then when the real goldsmith had the setting ready it would be brought to us by the river, and Jacob Jacobovitch would go again to the monastery and say that he begged permission from the Bishop to attend his midnight Christmas Service; and he would go up to the altar in his cloak and stand in a dark corner by the crucifix, where our icon was kept near the window, and he would take it and hide it under the lappet of his cloak. Then he would take off his cloak as if he were too hot, and would entrust it to his man and tell him to take it away. As soon as the man was outside he would seize the icon from the

cloak and run with it to the artist, who would then, while the service lasted, be able to take the painting of the old icon off its board and substitute the copy, fasten the setting on it and send it back, so that Jacob Jacobovitch could replace it as if nothing had happened. We said, 'We agree to all this.' 'But,' said he, 'remember that I am taking the part of the thief, and how can I be sure that none of you will betray me?'

"Luke answered, 'We are not the sort of folk to betray our benefactors; I will take the icon and bring you both back, the real one and the copy.' 'But suppose something hindered you?' Luke said, 'What could hinder me?' 'Well, you might die suddenly or be drowned.' Luke was thoughtful. Why, he said to himself, should there be such an obstacle; but in fact it sometimes happens that in digging a well you may discover a treasure, but if you go to market you may meet a mad dog; and he answered, 'In case that should happen, sir, I will place a man who, if I come to grief, will take all the blame on himself, and will endure death without betraying you.' 'And who is the man you are thinking of?' 'The blacksmith, Maroe,' answered Luke. 'That old man?' 'Yes, he is not young.' 'But he

seems a stupid fellow.' 'In this case, sir, we don't want his intellect, but we want a man who has a worthy spirit.' 'And how can a stupid man have a worthy spirit?' 'The spirit,' answered Luke, 'does not depend upon the intellect; the spirit bloweth where it listeth: it is just like hair which grows long and thick with one man and scanty with another.' The Englishman reflected and said, 'Well, well, all this will be a very interesting experience, but how will he help me if I get into trouble?' 'This is how it will be,' said Luke; 'you will stand by the window in the church, but Maroe will stand under the window outside, and if at the end of the service I do not appear with the icons, he will break the glass and slip in at the window, and take all the blame on himself.'

"The Englishman was much pleased with this plan. 'Strange, strange,' said he, 'but how can I be sure that this stupid man of worthy spirit will not run away?' 'Well, sir, this is a case of mutual trust.' 'Yes, mutual trust. Yes, h'm! mutual trust, indeed; which is it to be? Shall I go to prison for a peasant, or will he suffer the knout for me? H'm, h'm! will he keep faith when he feels the whip?'

"Maroe was sent for and the plan was ex-

plained to him; and he just said, 'Anything else to be done?' and the Englishman asked, 'And you won't run away?' Maroe answered, 'Why should I?' 'Lest they should flog you or send you to Siberia.' But Maroe said, 'I don't care,' and would not talk the matter over. The Englishman was well pleased and grew quite lively. 'Delightful,' said he; 'most interesting.'

CHAPTER XIV

"IMMEDIATELY after this conversation we began to carry out our plan. We got the master's large boat, and rowed the Englishman to the shore by the town; from thence he took a carriage and drove to the monastery with the artist Sebastian, and in a little over an hour we saw the artist running towards us, with a sheet of paper in his hand, with a sketch of the icon. 'Did you see our dear one?' we asked, 'and can you make a good copy of him?' 'I saw him,' he replied, 'and I will copy him, only perhaps the copy will be rather more vivid in colour, but there is no harm in that; when we get the real icon it will be easy to deaden the colours.' 'Try hard to paint, dear friend,' we prayed. 'Yes,' he answered,

‘I will try hard.’ And when we had rowed him across, he set to work at once, and at dusk the Angel appeared on the canvas, as like to our Sealed Angel as two peas are to one another, only the colours were a little brighter. The goldsmith brought the plated setting that evening, as it had been ordered before.

“The most critical moment of our robbery drew near. Of course we had prepared everything; we had prayed, and were waiting for the appointed hour. As soon as the monastery’s first bell rang for service, we three men seated ourselves in a small boat; I and Grandfather Maroe, and Uncle Luke. Maroe had brought with him an axe, a chisel, shears, and a rope, in order to look like a thief, and we struck out for the monastery grounds. At that time of year dusk, of course, came early, and night fell on us, very dark in spite of the full moon, a real night for a robbery. Having reached the shore, Maroe and Luke left me in the boat under the bank, while they crept up to the monastery. I laid up the oars in the boat and fastened it to the bank, and then waited impatiently, ready to start as soon as Luke should step on board. My anxiety was so great that the time seemed terribly long; how, I asked myself, will the plan succeed, and shall we be

able to conceal the theft while the midnight service goes on? And I thought it was time to hear news. In the meanwhile the darkness increased, the wind howled, and instead of rain a damp snow fell; the boat began to rock in the wind, and I, wicked wretch, settled slowly down, wrapped in my coat, and began to doze. Then suddenly there was a jerk, the boat rocked; I started up and saw Uncle Luke had stepped in, and in an altered voice he said, 'Row.' I seized the oars, but in my terror could hardly place them in the rowlocks. With an effort I got them right and pushed off from the shore. Then I ventured to ask, 'Have you got the Angel?' 'I have; row quicker.' 'Tell me,' I begged, 'how you managed?'

"Without hindrance, as it was arranged.' 'And can we return it in time?' 'We must succeed, for they have not yet read the Epistle. Row. Where are you rowing?' I looked round: good heavens! I was not rowing in the right direction. I had kept, as appeared right, across the river's current, but our hamlet was not to be seen; this was because the wind was driving the snow into our eyes, and all round was rolling and roaring water, and the surface of the water breathed ice.

“But, thanks to the mercy of God, we did arrive, and both of us jumped out of the boat and ran home as fast as we could. The artist was ready, he acted coolly but steadily; first he took the icon in his hands, and as the people bowed down before it, he allowed everyone to approach and look at the sealed face, and he himself compared it with his copy and said, ‘Excellent! only now we must subdue the colours with a little dirt and saffron.’ He took the icon by the corner in a vice, then took the saw and it began to whiz quickly between the canvas and the board. We all stood round and dreaded lest a disaster should occur. It was wonderful! Can you imagine that with his enormous hands he sawed from a plank a thin piece of wood not thicker than a piece of cardboard. Here was danger of an accident. If the saw swerved a hair’s-breadth aside, it would lacerate the face and make a hole through the canvas. But the painter Sebastian accomplished all this so coolly, and with such skill, that as we watched him our fears were allayed. And when he had sawn the picture to a thin layer then he took his copy and crumpled it up in his tight fist, and then beat it hard against the edge of the table and rasped it, as if he were going quite to spoil it, and at

last he held up the canvas to the light, and behold! this new picture was full of chinks like a sieve. Then Sebastian took it and fastened it on to the old board, and he took some dark-coloured mud, and mixed it with old olive oil, and rubbed it all over the surface of the copy. He did this quickly, and the new icon soon looked as old as the real picture. All this oiling was done in a moment, and then our people fixed the plated setting of the icon, and the painter arranged the real icon on the board which had been prepared for it, and he asked for a piece of an old felt hat. Now began the most difficult business of removing the sealing-wax. They gave the painter an old felt hat; he at once tore off a piece and covering the sealed icon with it he called out, 'Give me a hot iron.' By his orders there was a heavy tailor's iron heating in the stove. Michaela hooked it out and handed it to Sebastian. He wrapped a cloth round his hand, spat upon the iron, and then drew it quickly across the felt. An evil smell rose up at once, but the painter went on two or three times ironing the felt. His hand flew like lightning, and the smoke went up in a pillar from the felt. But Sebastian kept at it vigorously; with one hand he turned the

felt about, and with the other he drove the hot iron, each time keeping it a second longer and pressing it harder, and suddenly he threw aside the iron and the felt, and held the icon up to the light—and the seal was gone! The genuine olive oil of Stroganov had withstood everything, and the sealing-wax had all disappeared, only leaving a soft rosy glow on the face, but the holy shining face was now visible. Then some prayed, some wept, some kissed the painter's hand, but Luke did not forget his task, and as every minute was precious he gave Sebastian the imitation icon and said, 'Now finish this quickly.' But the painter answered, 'My work is finished; I have done all I undertook to do.' 'But now add the seal.' 'Where?' 'Why, on the Angel's face, to make it like the other one was.' But Sebastian shook his head and answered, 'No, I am not an official that I should dare to do such a thing.' 'But what can we do?' 'I don't know either what is to be done; you must get an official or a German to do this, but as you have not got them now you must do it yourselves.' Luke said, 'We should not dare to do that.' The painter answered, 'I cannot dare to seal it.' At this we were much disturbed, when suddenly Jacob Jacobovitch's

wife flew into the room, pale as death, and cried out, 'What, are you not ready?' We answered, 'Ready, and yet not ready; the important work is done, but a trifle is hindering us.' She said in her broken Russian, 'What are you waiting for? Do you not hear the noise outside?' We listened, and we grew paler than she was; we had been so busy that we had paid no attention to the weather, but now we heard a roar—the ice is coming! I rushed out and saw that the river was a field of ice; like wild beasts the floes jumped on each other, one after another they bounded, and roared and broke. I did not stop to think, but ran to the boats; not one was there, they had been carried away. My tongue was paralysed so that I could not speak, and my ribs gave way so that I nearly fell to the ground. I could not move; I could not cry out.

"But while we were all dumbfounded and in the dark, the Englishwoman, who was alone in the hut with Michaela, and knew what was troubling us, seized the icon, and in about a minute she returned to the steps with a lantern and called to us, 'Take it; it is ready.' We looked; there was a seal on the new Angel's face! Luke at once seized the icon and cried out, 'A boat!' I explained that there was no

boat; it had been carried away. I must tell you that the ice was struggling like a troop of wild horses; it broke against the ice-breaker and shook the bridge violently, so that the chains, which were half as thick as boards, rattled loudly. When the Englishwoman heard this she threw up her arms, and in a voice unlike her own, screamed, 'James,' and fell down fainting. But we stood there and could only ask ourselves, 'What will happen now to the Englishman; what will happen to Grandfather Maroe?' And at that moment the monastery bell rung out for the third time. Uncle Luke suddenly roused himself and called out to the Englishwoman, 'Cheer up, lady, your husband will be safe; only it may be that our old Grandfather Maroe may have his ancient skin tormented by the executioner, and his honest face disfigured with a brand, but that will only be after I am dead!' And with these words he crossed himself and set out. I called out, 'Uncle Luke, where are you going? Levontia perished, and you will perish.' And I followed him to try to keep him back, but he snatched up the oar under his feet, which I, on arriving, had thrown on the ground, and waving to me cried out, 'Away with you or I will kill you.'

“I have already confessed to you, sir, in the former part of my story, what a coward I was when I left the dead youth Levontia on the ground and ran up a tree; but now, I assure you, the oar did not frighten me, and I should not have let Luke go alone, but—you may believe it or not, as you please—at the moment that I remembered the name of Levontia, I saw before me in the darkness the form of Levontia, and he warned me away with his hand. I was terrified and started back, and Luke stood already on the chain, and suddenly stepped firmly on it and called out through the noise of the storm, ‘Begin the anthem.’

“The leader of the choir, Aretha, was standing among us, and directly he heard this, he at once started, ‘I will open my mouth,’ and the others joined in, and we sang the anthem lustily against the roar of the storm; and Luke had no fear of death and walked on the chain. He crossed the first one quickly and then stepped on the second—but how fared he further? The darkness swallowed him up, he disappeared; was he still crossing or had he fallen, and had the cruel flocs of ice engulfed him? We could not say; ought we to pray for his safety, or weep for the death of a strong and faithful soul?

CHAPTER XV

“WHAT was happening now on the other shore? The Very Rev. Bishop was conducting the midnight service in the large church, little thinking that a theft was then being carried out near the altar; our Englishman, Jacob Jacobovitch, was standing with the Bishop’s consent in the chancel by the altar, and having stolen our Angel, sent it away, as had been arranged, wrapped in his cloak, and Luke had hurried away with it; Grandfather Maroe, faithful to his word, stood under the window outside, and waited for the moment when, if Luke did not return, the Englishman would leave, and Maroe would break through the window and slip in with his pickaxe and chisel, as if he were the real thief. The Englishman did not take his eyes off Maroe, and saw that he was punctual and standing obediently at his post; and the moment he observed that the Englishman had pressed his face against the window to look at him, he at once nodded his head as if to say, ‘The responsible thief is here.’

“Both were thus assured of the good faith of each other; but there was yet a third acting at the same time, on whom so much depended, and they did not know what he was doing at

that moment. When the service was at last over, and as soon as the bells had rung their last peal, the Englishman gently opened the small window to let Maroe slip in, and he himself was on the point of leaving, when suddenly he saw Maroe turn away from him, and, no longer looking at him, Maroe fixed his eyes on the river and repeated eagerly, 'May God bring him over, may God bring him over!' Then suddenly he started and cried out like a drunken man: 'God has brought him, God has brought him!' Then Jacob Jacobovitch was in great despair and thought: 'Well, this is the end of it all, the silly old man has gone crazy and I am undone'; but looking closer he saw Maroe embracing Luke. Maroe said to Luke, 'I saw you crossing on the chains, and you had lanterns.' But Uncle Luke said, 'I had no lanterns.' 'Whence then was the light?' Luke answered, 'I don't know, I saw no lights, but I ran as fast as I could, and I don't know how it was that I did not fall; it seemed as if someone held me up under both arms.' Maroe said, 'Those were Angels; I saw them, therefore I shall not live: I shall die to-day.' Luke had no time to say more; he did not answer Maroe, but quickly gave both the icons to the Englishman through the window. He took

them, but handed them back immediately. 'Why,' he exclaimed, 'there is no seal!' Luke said, 'No seal?' 'Yes, no seal.' Then Luke crossed himself and said, 'It is all over; there is no time to alter things. The Angel of the Orthodox Church has done this wonder, and I know now why he did it.'

"Then Luke rushed into the church and pressed up to the altar where the Bishop was disrobing, and falling at his feet said: 'Thus and thus have I done; I am a sacrilegious man, order me to be put in chains and send me to prison.' But the Bishop, as befitted his reputation, listened to the whole story and answered: 'Now it has been made clear to you where the true Faith really is; you,' said he, 'by a deceitful trick took the seal off your Angel, but our Angel took the seal off himself, and brought you hither.' Uncle Luke said: 'I see, Reverend Father, and I tremble; send me quickly to prison.' But the Bishop answered, as it behoved his authority, 'By the power given me of God, I forgive and absolve thee, my son. Prepare in the morning to receive the most holy Body of Christ.'

"I think, sirs, there is nothing more to tell you. The next day Luke Cyrilov and Uncle Maroe returned and said: 'Fathers and

Brothers, we have seen the glory of the Angel of the State Church, and her divine aspect in the benevolence of the Bishop, and have ourselves been anointed with her holy oil, and have this day at Mass received the Body and Blood of Christ.' As I myself, ever since I was the guest of the hermit Pamba, had felt inclined to join in the prayers of all Russia, I called out for them all: 'We agree with you, Uncle Luke, and so we shall all be gathered under one shepherd like lambs'; and it was only then that we understood how or whither our Angel had led us, for at first our footsteps wandered, and then we were unsealed, thanks to the love of folk for one another, as has been shown in the events of this wonderful night."

CHAPTER XVI

THE tale was ended: the listeners were silent. But at last one of them coughed, and observed that the whole story could be explained by natural causes—the dreams of Michaela; the vision which reassured her in her waking moment; the fall of the Angel, which might have been pushed over by a stray cat or dog. The death of Levontia could also be explained, as he was ill before he met Pamba; and in like manner all

the coincidences could be explained in the words which at that time Pamba spoke in riddles.

"It is also quite applicable," continued the speaker from the audience, "that Luke was able to walk on the chains with an oar, for it is well known that the masons are very expert in walking and climbing wherever they want to go, and the oar would act as a balancing-pole; one can also understand why Maroe saw Luke with lights round him which he imagined were angels. When a man was under such a strain and chilled to the bone he might have seen anything, and it would not be surprising. I could even understand that Maroe fulfilled his prediction of dying that very day"—"And he did die," interrupted Mark—"Very well then, and was there anything wonderful in an old man of eighty dying after the agitation he had undergone and the chill of the night? But there is one thing which is not clear to me; how could the seal disappear from the Angel after the English lady had sealed it?"

"But that is just what is quite simple," said Mark gaily; and he described how soon afterwards he had found the seal between the picture and the setting.

"How could that have happened?" asked the listener.

"This was how it was," answered Mark.

"The lady also did not dare to spoil the face of the Angel by a seal, she therefore set the seal on a piece of paper, which she slipped under the edge of the setting. She managed this with great skill and adroitness, but when Luke carried the icons in his bosom they got shaken, and then the seal fell out."

"Then the whole affair was simple and natural?"

"There are many who think that everything happened naturally; and not only educated gentlemen who understand these matters, but even our own brethren dispute about this and mock at us.

"But we do not dispute with those who use these arguments. As everyone believes, so let him judge; but for us it is all the same by what paths God seeks out a man and out of what vessel God gives him to drink, only let him quench his thirst together with those of his own country. But there—I see the carters are aroused and coming out from under the snow. They have evidently had a good rest and are starting directly; perhaps they will give me a lift. The night is gone; I have wearied you and taken you with me through many adventures. Now I have the honour to wish you a happy New Year, and forgive me, for Christ's sake, the roughness of my speech."

THE PEASANT

By DEMETRIUS GRIGOROVITCH

THE PEASANT

I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

THE vesper bells were ringing. The solemn sound of hundreds of bells grew louder by degrees, and spread in gentle waves over Moscow. In the clear light of the evening sun which was setting in the west, Moscow appeared an enchanted, a golden city. In these bright spring evenings there is nothing to be compared with Moscow. Yet I cannot find words to describe the feelings of joy which possessed me in bidding adieu to the city.

My spirits seemed to revive when I had left the river, when I had passed through the last street with its crowded restaurants, its carts and pastry-cook shops, and found myself at last at the barrier gates.

The noise and bustle of the barrier, which makes it appear like a huge bazaar, also renders more striking the sharp contrast between town

and country. With what relief you throw back the hood of your tarantass! But even when the barrier is passed the change is not quite complete, for you still meet for some time carts full of calves and vegetables and provisions of all kinds; you meet numbers of masons and carpenters and other workmen. All this reminds you still of the crowd and bustle of the town which has long wearied you and which you have so recently left. From time to time you drive through straggling villages with fine stone houses which look as if they had been brought straight from the Tverscky Boulevard. The people in the street wear the stiff hats and blue kaphtans of the middle classes; the women in stuff dresses; the young men from a factory are smartly dressed; the girls have sparkling eyes and round white arms which never wielded a sickle. Nearly every doorway is turned into a shop with weights and cakes, pitch, and felloes of wheels; in the windows stand huge samovars. At ten versts or more from the city gates you meet carts ornamented with brightly-painted flowers, where, perched up on high, sits a citizen's stout wife with a bright purple kerchief on her head, and by her side is her stout husband, a merchant perhaps,

carrying oatmeal or wheat-flour to some city warehouse. And for a long time you will come across a wearisome succession of figures that seem made in one mould. For a long time you will still hear the clink of coppers, and that unbearable stupefying din which haunts you day and night in the city. Dwellers by the sea assure us that the sound we hear in large shells is caused by the roar of the sea which is still echoing in their empty spaces—"We hear the murmur of the sea," they say. And I imagine that the human ear retains, if not for ever, yet for a long time, the noise of the town. We have now long left the city behind us, and gradually the signs of its bustle have disappeared, even the clang of the bells, which had long overpowered other sounds, is drowned and lost in the distance, yet there is still the din in our ears—the roar and rattle of streets, the rumble of carriages, the clatter of talk, well-known voices, and exclamations. . . . I am heartily weary of the town, yet the pain of bidding good-bye still lingers if you leave behind in the city those dear to you and many pleasant memories. But when there are no friends to regret, when you leave behind a bustling, trivial existence which has caused only a feeling of mental and spiritual wear-

ness, and doubtless also of discontent and regret—then it is impossible to describe the joy that you feel at leaving the city behind you. Then you understand why you earnestly try to forget all the past, why your heart eagerly stretches forth, on and on to that limitless horizon, full of such untroubled and solemn peace.

With every step you take forward the silence around you grows deeper and deeper, the air is purer and purer. I looked with impatience for the moment when I should say good-bye to the high road. Fortunately I had not long to wait; after driving for fifteen versts I turned into a country lane.

II

Now I am again among the fields, among wide spaces, I breathe an air smelling of the earth and the green herb. It was a lovely evening, the sun was still high above the horizon, for it wanted an hour or more to sunset. Coolness breathed from a transparent cloudless sky, which seemed to have imparted its freshness to the earth itself, which everywhere bore tokens of youth. April was drawing near its close. The spring was early and pleasant; snow had long since disappeared from

the fields. Everywhere to the right and left of the road, far and near, on every hill and slope, the winter-sown corn was green, and was lighted up by the slanting rays of the sun. The narrow strips of path were still dark ; instead of being overgrown with thick patches of clover and brambles and wild briars, there glistened the stalks of the hollow, dried-up stubble of last year. Here and there the soft, velvety leaves of the wild strawberry pushed their way through. But how good it was, even now, to be among the fields. The stillness is impressive ; not a blade stirs, but yet you feel, you even hear that all this limitless space is full of life and movement. You strain your ears, you listen eagerly, and strange to say, these sounds leave a joyful impression on your spirit and soothe it—how different to the noises of the town. In the shining depth of heaven's vault you cannot see a lark, yet the air is full of its outpoured song. In every furrow, in the thick, short grass, in the green corn, you hear a piping, a rustle. Far off, in the woods, the turtle-dove coos, and wild pigeons fly hither and thither.

Everything is alive ; in the tiniest twig, in the tenderest stalks the new sap is moving, rising from the root, which is now so warm in

the sun-baked soil. Swarms of insects are buzzing in the air and rock themselves on the swaying blades of young grass.

The sun is everywhere: the sun penetrates through thick bushes which cannot yet stop its path with their leaves; the sun melts the soiled patches of snow in the depths of the forests and ravines; the sun pours his hot beams over the fields, where the new shoots of the winter corn are bright among the sparse green, and last year's stubble is yellow and mouldering. What a pleasant thing it is to let the spring sun shine on your back and your bare hand! You do not feel that raw dampness in the air which comes in the first spring days when the ice is melting and the rivers overflow their banks. The water is clear and reflects the pure blue sky. The woods, especially if you look at them sideways, show how the leaf buds are ready to burst. In two or three days the birds will be building their nests under the shelter and canopy of young leaves, and you may meet them even now carrying straws and feathers in their beaks.

The road is moist in some places, but there is no mud anywhere. The wheels run as if on velvet, and leave their tracks in the black earth as if they had been varnished. It was beautiful weather for a journey.

III

I had to travel about 200 versts on this country road ; not far you will say, but it was indeed quite a long journey. I had to cross the Oka, over which at this season of the year there would be no bridge. There were also several smaller rivers to cross ; this was usually done at a ford, because a ford was more to be trusted than the bridges. But this I did not mind.

I must mention that from my childhood I have had a special preference for our Russian country lanes. If fate compels you to travel through Russia, if you are not hurrying anywhere, if you are not too exacting about material comforts, and especially if you are weary of cities, let me advise you to turn aside from the highway.

And if you ask, why turn to the by-roads, what charm is there in them ? I will answer : the whole poetry of the land is in these lanes. I here give poetry its widest meaning. You will of course not find white loaves and samovars, even though you go through the whole village ; you will not find painted toll-bars and post-houses in these lanes—they are winding, not straight as a line—no engineer has troubled himself about them ; no, they are

simply trodden out by the bast shoes of the peasants. But what does that matter? See what a fine network they have spread from one corner of the country to another; where do they begin, and where do they end? They cut through the heart of Russia, and if you wander through them they will help you to penetrate deeply into the mysteries of that dimly-known land.

In these by-ways life is simpler and the soul is calmer in its thoughtful dreaminess. Here you will learn the life of the people; here only you will see the vast illimitable prairie, of which you have often heard, and which maybe you have tried to imagine.

Now you will hear the primitive speech and the real Russian song; and I am sure that your heart will throb with pleasure if only you love that song, that people, and that land.

IV

And now observe what varied scenes lie before you. The lane, meeting other lanes, goes on and on, disclosing continually fresh views—here a small village clinging timidly to a slope; here a pond with pollard willows, and green weeds and a floating stand, where a crowd of women are busy beating and washing clothes, a

pond that reflects a bit of blue sky and the roof of a leaning cottage; here a group of gnarled oaks with jackdaws flying around, and a herd lying down beside them; here a wide unbounded stretch of prairie; and here, where four roads meet, a solitary cross or wayside shrine. Here is a hollow full of hazel bushes, and a stream running through it with a sandy bottom often dry and strewn with pebbles. You drive over a bridge and your horse trembles with fear as his hoof touches it; he trembles truly not only for his own safety but for that of the rash man who has entrusted his bones to him. With a wild chattering cry a flock of lapwings rises, startled by the noise of wheels.

And now you are again on a by-road which slants down, and to right and left new scenes open before you; here a fir-wood which quickly disappears, and now a field of young green corn with flying shadows of clouds across it, and furrows slanting to the far horizon; and now a large village appears with a white church on a hill, and a stream reflecting some old lime-trees, with meadows, cottages, with flocks of starlings and the crane of a well, standing dark against the sky. Truly, how pleasant are these scenes.

V

As I penetrated farther and farther into the country, the silence around me became more solemn. The sun went down, and with it all life seemed quenched; the birds no longer sang, and all the harmonious music was silent which all day had filled the earth and sky. The heavens grew darkly blue, and the stars began to shine. . . .

The next day at eventide I drew near the goal of my journey. The careless, happy frame of mind which had not left me during my travels began to desert me; I know not why, but my blood coursed quicker. I began to feel that inward agitation which comes when we are expecting either joy or sorrow. When I reached the top of the hill whence I could see the beginning of the village, then beyond it a wood, then the roof of my home, my heart beat wildly.

Do not believe our city wiseacres when they mock at our simplest, our best and most natural feelings, calling them childish fancies or silly, sentimental extravagances. I am convinced that they do not believe what they preach, and that they are merely posing. For only fools will laugh at what they neither

know nor have experienced. The philosophy of our acquaintances consists of nothing but dry phrases which give out a cheap, tinkling sound. True philosophy is founded on convictions, but vain reasonings lead to nothing. Happiness consists in a simple life ; they only live simply who follow their own impulses and confidently and openly obey the suggestions of their heart. Give to any philosopher a picturesque piece of ground and a house, some comfortable warm corner hidden like a nest in a green bower ; let there be memories of a pleasant childhood associated with the house—and then, believe me, if you visit him after a long absence, he will confess frankly that all his philosophy is rubbish and not worth a farthing.

VI

With every turn of the wheels I sat and looked out impatiently. My eyes longingly passed over the well-known row of willows to the roof of the house which began to peep out of a corner of the old garden. Already, in thought, I was on the path trodden across the courtyard which led to the lime avenue, the scene of my childish games, of my first joys and tears. Is the swing still there, which hung between two old trees ? What has become of

my little garden, not a yard square, but which then seemed to me a spacious pleasure-ground? Is there still under the old wall of the barn a white stone slab, under which, with some tears, I buried a dead sparrow? I have become a child again. I am glad and excited as if something awaited me there, as if all my past youth was stretching out its hands to me, and offering me, God knows, what happiness!

VII

But in truth, no joy was awaiting me. My home had long been empty; no one waved a kerchief to me from afar, no one ran to the gate to meet me. The very house had a sullen aspect, and its grey wooden walls with tightly closed shutters offered no welcome; the garden was neglected and the fence half broken down, and many a post had gone.

Nevertheless, strange to say, I had no feeling of melancholy. Besides the sweet memories of childhood, I had continually a sensation of relief. I was unfeignedly glad that no one met me, no one thought of me at that moment, no one troubled himself about me. I went into the deserted house with the same feeling of joy with which I had arrived. Do not accuse me of being a misanthrope, or of having

a liking for gloomy solitude. It is not necessary to be a misanthrope because one sometimes is intensely desirous of mental and spiritual quiet. I was simply weary of town life and craving for calm.

VIII

I have met persons strongly attached to their family, and yet suddenly, in the midst of happy surroundings, and at first unconsciously, they are attacked by a terrific melancholy. In thought and word this one idea pervades their mind, to go away somewhere, to disappear, where nothing will remind them of ties broken for a season. And this without their family or outward circumstances being the impelling cause.

Among the various convictions which I have gathered from life and from inward experience, are these: the world is often surprised at the duration of certain ties of the affections, but the cause of it are the obstacles which the world itself places between these ties, which prevent the persons who are attached from living together or meeting frequently. Take away these obstacles and then the contrary happens, the world is surprised at the want

of duration in ties of the heart. The happiness of many, many families, is only preserved by temporary separation. Some hearts are quickly satiated, others more slowly, but all in time experience satiety. And lastly, even without this feeling, there are persons so constituted that full and complete solitude will at times appear to them the most blessed and perfect state of existence. At such times affectionate words breathing true tenderness may only irritate the soul.

IX

My house was very well situated; it was outside the village, from which a hill and a wood separated it, and no sounds came from thence except the bark of a dog or the crowing of a cock at daybreak. The village itself was in a pleasant situation, lost as it were in the depths of the country between boundless fields and woods.

My first impulse when I entered my room was to open the window looking on to the garden. Twilight had given place to night. Tall lime-trees surrounded the garden, great masses of bushes, scattered here and there, were already bursting their buds, and the green paths between them were silvered with dew.

On the left, a corner of the pond glistened between the coal-black stems of the trees, and the still water reflected like a mirror the dark blue sky and timidly twinkling stars. The breeze which had risen before sunset was hushed, and not a bough stirred. The damp smell of evening mists mingled with the smell of buds and young shoots and last year's leaves, and seemed to penetrate the whole atmosphere and distil itself over the garden. A full unbroken silence reigned, not only here but far around.

I went to the window and gave myself up to the new and delightful impression. My hearing, freed from the clatter of the town, was keenly alert, but no sound disturbed the peace of the neighbourhood. Very rarely came the pipe of a suddenly awakened bird, or the buzz of a belated beetle, knocking its horned head against a bough, or the creaking of a young branch which was swollen by the rising sap—and then again silence reigned.

The influence of this peace which extends over the fields can only be fully felt by one who has long been oppressed by the agitations of the sea of humanity, whose nerves and ears have tingled and suffered for many years from the noises of a town. I felt that peace was

poured over my soul, that it had grown calmer and clearer.

X

Every day that I live here convinces me that rural life improves our human nature. Besides the fact that it obliges us to commune with our own minds, that it offers few distractions and enables us to concentrate our thoughts and make them clearer, its great advantage is that it humbles our pride.

In regard to this, its effect is exactly opposite to that of the town. Everything there tends to make us think highly of ourselves. We are crowded together in houses and comparatively narrow streets, and at each step we meet objects invented by man, and we involuntarily begin to think much of ourselves. Everything increases our confidence in our powers, our strength, and our faculties.

But in the country a totally different impression is made on us by the vast spaces which surround us from morn to eve. In the streets among the houses you are an object to be remarked, but here—you are but a speck in the universe. And your power is lessened as much as your size; here everything springs up and moves, is created

or decays without paying the least attention to you, without asking your advice or your permission.

In the town you can give yourself up to proud admiration, and a part of this admiration will fall upon yourself, but here—you must admire and be silent. The mind, struck by the endless superiority of the works of Nature over those made by the hand of man, is everywhere awed by the greatness, and silently acknowledges its childish impotence.

XI

It is true that you will meet here, as everywhere, failures, obstacles, misfortunes; but if you do not leave the peaceful sphere of village life these misfortunes will not exasperate your soul; there is always something which reconciles you to them. And, indeed, whom can you complain of here? Can you reproach the rain which did not fall in due season on your cornfield, or the late spring and cold mornings which kept back the growth of the grass and the winter corn? Can you reproach the worm which gnawed the root of your wheat, or the hail which rattled down on the wide field of rye, which was yellowing in the June sunshine and which promised

such a rich harvest? No one is to blame. The blow comes not from man: "it is God's holy will." "He does what pleases Him," says the simple peasant, though he and his family in losing their crop lose the year's sustenance. This thought, that God's providence rules everywhere, checks all exasperation, all useless murmuring, however great the blow may be. This life among the fields accustoms you little by little to leave all cares in the hand of Providence. An existence which gives itself up entirely to the arrangements of Providence and the habit to entrust all to His will produces, as it seems to me, an inward calm which you will seek in vain in society and the life of the town, where everything depends on us and on mortals like ourselves.

Life here flows evenly, quietly. If you live honestly and conscientiously you will not know what it is "to kill time." The days will pass before you are aware of it; and raising your head you will see with surprise that the sun has run more than half his course in the heavens.

XII

A closer acquaintance with the simple life of the peasant will also have a powerful effect on the mind. I have long observed that the cultivated classes of society feel much sympathy with this primitive existence, and whether it be described in books or limned on canvas, it has always attracted and influenced men. The popularity of such artists as Leopold Robert, the success of many authors, whether ancient or modern, testifies strongly to this mysterious sympathy with the life of village folk in all their simple surroundings. How can we explain the shock we all feel when brought into actual contact with this primitive life and its workings? Is it rural life itself which is in fault, or did we in our ignorance of it, and our weariness of town life, imagine a completely idyllic existence, and having formed this image we could find it nowhere in the country, for disenchantment met us at the first contact?

Life in the fields accustoms us to look at things in a healthy, unexaggerated manner, and we then soon become reconciled to village life. We make allowances for its coarser side, when we consider the ignorance and the natural

qualities of human nature ; we remind ourselves that the village is still in a primitive state.

But, on the other hand, what a treasure of kindness and of poetry we find among the peasantry. Their blind trust in Providence surprises and touches us ; this final idea of all philosophies, this last result of human wisdom and the efforts of the human intellect. This childish simplicity touches us, this giving up a search into the secrets of nature, this joyful, timid acceptance of her gifts with unbounded gratitude. Whose soul has not been stirred while watching this continual daily toil, begun with the sign of the cross, and carried on with such patient uncomplaining labour ? When such a scene lies spread before you, and a vast expanse lies here showing the results of this primitive and patient labour, then your idyllic dream, the work of an idle fancy, seems to you to have vanished into nothingness. Look and you will see that the poetry of real life and work far exceeds all that your idle imagination could picture.

XIII

MY RAMBLE

The time had come, after a long winter, when the husbandman goes again to work in

the fields; the ploughman takes the plough-share which has grown rusty during its long idleness and he makes it brighter than silver by driving it through the earth now warmed by the sun. The time had come for the first ploughing and sowing, and I wended my way to the fields.

It was a beautiful evening, similar to that on which I reached my home. Opal clouds of rounded forms with edges shining like bright metal, seemed immovable in the heavens, disclosing here and there openings into blue depths beyond. The country round was full of cheerful light. The leaves had opened their fresh green everywhere, and violets and lilies of the valley appeared on the edge of the wood. The pale pink and white bells of convolvulus, which at the first breath of spring suddenly bloom in the stubble, were decking the fields and shedding their faint odour of almonds in the still air. The sun was as hot as in July, though it was only the beginning of May, and was five o'clock in the evening. But neither the heat nor the distance of the far outlying field deterred me from my goal. I passed the hill and the wood which separated me from the village, which I skirted, and crossed a stream, then the road climbed a hill. The

slopes were covered here with bushes, and there with groves of birch and fir, which went down to a dell with a sparkling stream winding with many a curve through it. A fine view disclosed itself at the top of the hill, but it was a long climb before I reached it. As I descended the other side the air was fresher, and the country lay before me like a map; the village seemed close to the bridge, and my house and the wood seemed close to the village: all seemed as small as those toys which children have, where a piece of moss represents a tree, and a bit of a looking-glass is a stream. The sheep scattered through the meadow down in the valley seemed like little white dots, which shone in the sun and disappeared in the long blue shadows cast by the clouds. Fields occupied about two versts of high table-land. The horizon was bounded only by the sky, and on the left lay the border of the wood which went down to the dell; in the far distance the clouds seemed to rise out of the earth.

As I went forward there was more wind; sometimes it blew on me as warm as if from the mouth of a stove, and with it came the smell of the fertile soil which is pleasant to inhale. The cry of the ploughman came clearer as he urged his horse on to a fresh

furrow, and soon a wide expanse lay before me, with its ploughmen and horses and carts, and buzzing insects, and with the larks unceasingly pouring out their song in the sky above.

XIV

The road lay through the midst of the fields, which were divided into equal parts; roots and plants upturned by the plough were scattered on some of the boundary paths, while others with young green grass made a strong contrast to the brown, newly-ploughed furrows. Earthy exhalations floated in the air, and the rays of the sun gave a kind of golden halo to the objects which it lighted up.

In a corner of nearly every field stood a telega (cart) with seed-corn. A little further, on one side, were the ploughmen. In front of all went the sower; he was usually a man stricken in years, a father or grandfather; a sieve or basket full of grain hung from his shoulders; striding forward with calm even steps, the old man put his hand in the basket, then raising it in the air, scattered the grain, which fell in an even semicircle on the ground. As the sower stepped on and disappeared, his place was taken by his son or grandson, who guided the plough and covered with earth the

scattered seed. Then came the harrow, jingling and bumping with clods of grass and roots clinging to its teeth. The horse was generally led by a lad, but sometimes, if it were an old mare accustomed to the work, it went alone, quietly following the master, only now and then going slower in order not to knock over its foal which, in its impatience, stretched its neck under the shaft and began sucking its mother with all its strength. But the procession did not end here; by every harrow flew a disorderly rout of jackdaws, cranes, and blue pigeons. They seemed quite accustomed to the men and the horses. One was eagerly darting to the ground, another was devouring a worm in the air. The birds followed the harrow the whole time, in nowise scared by the cries and whistling of the ploughmen. The fields were alive with birds.

XV

Though a medley of sounds reached me—the cries and whistling of the ploughmen, the screams and noisy quarrels of the birds, the trampling of men and horses, passing from one end of the field to the other, the buzzing of insects and neighing of horses, and, mingled with these, the sweet song of larks—the un-

paid musicians of the ploughman—yet these many and various sounds contrived to form one harmonious whole. The broad spaces of the fields softened and united all sounds. This scene of activity produced a sensation of calm and gentle peace and rest. As I passed from one field to another, I came to the last, situated on the edge of a neighbouring wood. The field sloped to the west towards a valley, and the wood, which half encircled it, threw long, jagged shadows across the furrows. I could see that only one labourer was here; he alone it was who sowed and ploughed and harrowed. As I drew nearer my surprise increased, for I recognised him as belonging to a numerous family. It seemed very strange to me that his father was absent, for the first sowing is considered an important day among these simple folk, and the old men usually take part in it. The year before I had seen the old man in this very field at this season. I could not understand why his son was alone in his toil, for the whole family were considered to be most industrious and most painstaking in all farm work. I left the path, crossed the field, and was soon by the young ploughman's side.

XVI

His name was Saul ; he was about thirty, tall and brown, with straight features, a long face, and curly fair hair. At first sight he did not appear robust, but the open collar of his white shirt showed a broad, vigorous chest, already burnt by the sun ; his shoulders and the muscles of his arm were well developed, rising under the folds of his shirt. He carried a basket hanging from a cord across his shoulder ; it was full of grain, but he carried it as if he felt no weight. His brown eyes looked straight at you, with a calm, frank gaze. He had his back to the sun, and his figure seemed outlined with golden rays and stood out picturesquely in front of the dark blue shadows of the wood. I went up to him just as he had thrown the reins on the horse's back and was preparing to sow.

"How is it I don't see the old man ? Where is he ?"

"The old man is laid up at home," he answered, and took a step forward.

"How is that ?"

"He is very ill," he answered.

I then asked why his brother was not in the field, and was told that the brother was looking after his father.

"He has not been well all spring," added Saul, "and for three days he has been quite ill. . . . We are much afraid that he won't ever get up again; he is an old man, can he last much longer? These three days he has neither eaten nor drunk, nor spoken a word; he just lies there, and gives a sigh now and then. God knows what will happen," he concluded, taking the basket of grain in his hand and bowing his head.

I immediately guessed that the old man had had a paralytic stroke; he had been wonderfully active for his years, and when spring came his love of work naturally woke up again. Probably, according to his wont, he had worked too hard, and hasting to set in order many things, such as are necessary in springtime to be done by the farmer, he had overtaxed his aged strength, and his blood being fevered by too much labour and the impulse of spring, had suddenly refused to flow, and paralysis had struck him down. I began to ask his son for further details of what had happened.

XVII

"Two weeks ago," began Saul, but then he stopped, and stepping forward, clapped his hands to frighten away a flock of birds which

had settled on the cart, and were pecking away at the grain as hard as they could. "It was two weeks ago," he repeated, as he turned back to me. "God knows we expected nothing of the sort; the weather was improving and calmer, we began to get things ready, and to rejoice that the spring had come. The first day he spent all the morning in the fields looking at the winter corn, but he complained that his loins ached a good deal. 'I have such a pain here,' he said. In the evening I went to see him in the barn, and he said to me, 'Well, Saul, spring is here,' and he looked all round; 'spring is here, and we must begin to plough.' Then he began to complain of weakness. 'My strength is failing me; I shan't be able to go ploughing with you.' 'Come, father,' said I, 'don't forecast evil, God is merciful.' 'No,' said he, 'I shan't go ploughing with you, my heart tells me so.' Then he lay down on a bundle of straw and suddenly burst out crying; it was pitiable to see him. He had never done such a thing before. There he lay till evening, when we persuaded him to go into the house. The next day he was better, and went again into the field."

"Why didn't you stop him?"

"How could we stop him? He had always

been so active and fond of work ; you won't find such another. We spoke to hinder him going, and mother spoke, but he would not listen. He busied himself all about the place, going everywhere, and began to clean the harrow, but his hands trembled so. He went all about the yard to every corner, as if he felt he must say good-bye to it all ; my brother and I were quite taken aback. No, he will never get up again," he added after a short silence.

I asked what had happened three days ago.

"God knows, this is how it was," said Saul, shaking his head sadly. "He went to feed the horses ; he was always fond of horses, and no one must go but himself, though my brother and I, and my mother tried to dissuade him. But he would not listen to us. 'A little walk will do me good, perhaps,' he said. You could not do anything with him. But after a while my mother said to my brother and me, 'Father is long in coming back ; go and see after him.' So we both went. We looked under the cart shed, and we saw him lying there. We called to him, but he never spoke, and just lay there as if he were dead. And so we carried him speechless to the house, and from that time, for three days and nights, he has never spoken a word."

"But you should have bled him at once," said I, thinking that if they had taken proper steps he might have recovered.

"The doctor came twice," said Saul, "and twice he bled him, but it was no use, his blood seemed to be congealed. No doubt God has decreed that he must die. He will not tread the grass again," he concluded in such a calm yet melancholy voice that it made my heart ache. As he spoke these last words he shaded his eyes with his hand and looked across the fields. A woman was coming towards us, and as she drew nearer I saw the ploughman's face change; an anxious look came, his brows were knitted convulsively, his nostrils trembled. And now I could distinguish the features of the woman—she was Saul's wife.

XVIII

She stood for a moment to recover breath, and then began to run faster.

"Come, come, Saul; come home quickly," she cried as she ran. Her face was red, and showed signs of great trouble, perspiration ran down her sunburnt cheeks and mingled with her tears. The disorder in her features and her dress gave tokens of deep distress.

"What has happened?" we asked.

"Father is dying," she cried, "come and

bid him good-bye ” ; and she pressed her hands to her bosom and breathed with difficulty.

I looked at Saul. He stood with bowed head and arms hanging heavily down ; he stood thus for a moment as if thunderstruck. When he had spoken a few moments ago of his father dying he probably did not imagine that it would come so quickly. However much we foresee a calamity we try to cheat ourselves with hopes. The simple peasantry believe that the best way to escape a misfortune is to speak of it as sure to come. I was indeed struck by the outward calm of the ploughman, his features expressed deep melancholy rather than agitation, only his quivering nostrils and eyelids betrayed him. But his wife was beating her breast with her hands and weeping bitterly.

“ Come quickly, he is dying—come and bid him good-bye ; why do you stand there ? ” she said, seizing his arm. “ We are all there in the house, they have gone to fetch Uncle Karp ; come quickly. I will help to harness the horses,” she added, going towards the horses who were nibbling the grass on the path. Saul remained immovable for a few seconds. At last, slowly, as if collecting his thoughts, he ran his fingers through his hair, sighed heavily, made the sign of the cross, and went away

with his wife. His movements betrayed no agitation as he harnessed the horses in the cart, and although his thoughts were evidently far away, he forgot no detail, no strap was left undone. He said not a word to his wife ; he appeared neither to see nor hear her, though she stood by him weeping and urging him to haste, while she broke out into bitter regrets for the good old man who was dying. At length the horses and cart were ready, and the plough and harrow hoisted on the top, and they left the cornfield. I followed them.

A rosy light now lay over the fields, and the paths were bright where the sun's rays fell between the trees of the wood, whose lengthening shadows now stretched far. The fields were deserted. A cloud of gold dust showed in the distance, where a ploughman was riding his horse home after the day's work. Great flocks of birds circled overhead, and one by one gradually disappeared in the wood. As the shadows lengthened silence fell on all around.

XIX

THE HUSBANDMAN

I had known Saul's father from my childhood, but it was not only memories of the

past which bound me to him and made me regret his loss; I may say without exaggeration, that in losing him the whole district was deprived of one of its most worthy and respected elders.

Ivan Anesimich—this was his name—was one of those industrious, hard-working farmers of the old days, who alas! are fast disappearing. You rarely find them now in our villages. Instead of them we find factories established, and the cultivation of the land is neglected. The plough, the native guitar (*balaluka*), and the bast shoes have been exchanged for the weaver's shuttle, the red shirt, and the concertina, and the type of the original and primitive husbandman has vanished. Anesimich was one of the last who, so to say, lived on his fields. Years of bad crops did not daunt him. He went on ploughing, harrowing, and sowing when more money was to be made out of factories than out of the land. But it was not obstinacy that made him cling to the occupation of his ancestors, nor was he impelled by calculation or acute sagacity; the old man was not reckoning that bad years would not go on for ever, and that cotton goods would not always fetch a high price. His wits were not as keen and sharp as those of a factory

youth. In fact I have been told that he thought it a sin to try and forecast the future. "You cannot make or mar what is to be; it is in the hand of God," he was wont to say. The old man continued to cultivate the land, because he was used to be on the land, and was strongly bound to it by many ties; nor was this strange, for had he not been in the fields since childhood, and had not his mother carried him in his cradle to the cornfield when she went to work at harvest time? And this was long ago, for Anesimich was now eighty years old.

XX

When I thought of the old husbandman dying, all his uncomplaining laborious life and his childish simplicity rose up before me clearly; little traits of character and trifling events, long forgotten, came back to my mind, as if to make my regret the keener.

I was especially struck by the rare gentleness of his nature, by the purity and integrity of his character. The only thing, perhaps, which he did not love was the cotton factory; and yet, when the talk turned on this subject, I never heard him speak of it with scorn or contempt. I remember he would just shake his grey head and say, "A bad trade that, you

don't produce anything ; if factories fed people there would be some use in them. But it is impossible to praise the life of a factory hand, such wanderings, and tavern-drinking and squeakings" (by this he meant the concertinas) ; and he usually added, "if it brings in money, that is not a thing to run after—money only brings temptation ; it is not money that we need, but the blessed corn. If you have corn you want nothing more ; it is what every man requires, and why take anything else instead ?" He usually concluded with this remark : "To till the land, that is the most important work."

He never neglected an opportunity of speaking of husbandry, and would describe all its advantages in detail when he was in the mood. "Yes," he would say, "husbandry is the best occupation of all. If you work in any trade or in a factory, you have to please a master, and that is not always easy ; you try hard and you don't succeed, and you get angry and discontented. But it is not so when you till the earth ; you are responsible to yourself. If you work hard it is all right, and if you are idle you can blame yourself, but you live peaceably, nobody is angry, and all you do is in God's hand."

Anesimich showed by his actions how little

he cared to heap up money. If he had an extra penny to spend, he would employ it to get another bit of land, or put up a shed, or use it for the repairs on his house and farm. It was the custom in the district round to let the children work at winding cotton—even the little ones of eight years old were thus employed, and “earned their salt,” as their parents expressed it. But Anesimich would not hear of this for his children, they were free to run about in the woods and fields. But the elder brother of Saul could guide a plough at fourteen, and he never spoilt a furrow.

XXI

In spite of some bad years, in spite of refusing the advantages which factory life offered, Anesimich kept on in his even way of life. As he was a careful manager in his farm-work and lived simply, with no luxuries, he was never in want, and was even able to hold out a helping hand to others. A well-to-do peasant would often borrow flour and seed-grain from him. But, I must add, he always showed his sagacity on such occasions. If a man were disorderly or a drunkard, he would not even give him a taste of ice in the winter (as the saying is). He never lent

without making inquiries; but when he gave help to a neighbour, he never asked for compensation. Thanks to the factories, you could find a money-lender in almost every village; when a peasant got into difficulties suddenly and went to him to borrow oats and salt and money, he had to pay him half as much again when the time of the loan had expired. A peasant with us is very well acquainted with usury. But when it was suggested to the old husbandman that he would soon get rich if he would lend his money on interest, he always heard such proposals with indifference, as if he had nothing to do with them, and his answer was always the same: "I don't lend money," he would say, "I have no money by me, I only lend corn—if I have it; corn—that is God's gift, and He does not take interest from us; it would be a sin for us to take interest for it. Corn is a sacred thing—not like money; money comes from man, man coins money."

Anesimich was a master in all matters of husbandry. His knowledge, combined with his readiness to help and the patient endurance he showed, led his neighbours to consult him even on other matters. If a neighbour was buying a horse or a cow, Anesimich must first look at the animal, and his report decided the

purchase. If a neighbour was going to put up a new outhouse, or buy wood for fuel, or timber for a house, he would turn to the old man and profit by his experience; and especially in the labours of the field was Anesimich listened to, as if he were an oracle. What he did, the others did also; if he went out to sow, the village folk went out also, and till he put the sickle in his corn no one else would reap, although St. Peter's Day was past. "Anesimich has begun his harvest," the old peasant women would say, "so it is time for us to reap."

XXII

And indeed, no one knew better than the old husbandman when to sow and when to reap; no one knew so much about the land and the crops. For more than sixty years he had lived among the fields, and gradually year by year had drawn closer in intimacy with the soil. There was something touching in this tie with the land. These three or four corn-fields which his father and grandfather and great-grandfather had tilled before him, were the limiting conditions of his whole life. On them depended the nourishment of his children and of his whole family; all his hopes rested

on them, and he always commended them in prayer to God. How much toil and prayer they had cost him; how much anxiety and joy they had brought him; how much sweat he had poured on them during the labours of those sixty years. But they seemed to understand him, and a mysterious sympathy had grown up between him and them. "Ah," he cried, as he looked at his field and reproached it one summer day, "the winter corn has quite disappointed me; did I not scatter plenty of seed on you and plough you diligently, but the ear is thin and the stalk is shrunk—ah! you have disappointed me." The summer went by, the harvest was over; the storks and cranes had flown to warmer lands. Then Anesimich went forth again into the field which had not fulfilled his hopes. He made the sign of the cross and began anew with redoubled energy to plough the furrows—backwards and forwards he went, giving double tillage with plough and harrow—then he cried to the field: "Now surely I have done enough, you will not disappoint me again, the earth is as soft as down, not a clod left, a capital bed for the grain to lie in"; and he wiped away the drops of sweat with his sleeve. And, in truth, the next year the old man was not

disappointed when he looked on the luxuriant winter corn, which covered the field from one end to another with tall stalks waving their golden feathers of ripe oats in the wind. These few fields of his were the whole world to him; they engrossed his affections and thoughts, which rarely overstepped the green paths which bounded his land.

XXIII

But in this narrow space he had learnt much. Is not the wisdom of God as manifest in just a blade of grass as in His vaster works? Bounded by this narrow horizon, the old man had yet contrived, while living among these poor hills and woods, to gain year by year that knowledge and experience which are the wisdom required by village folk. This knowledge and experience enabled Anesimich to bring up his family in comfort and to give useful advice to those who would listen to him. "Well, Anesimich, is it not time to sow oats?" a neighbour would ask, as he stood by his door one spring day and warmed himself in the sun. "See how hot it is getting, and the earth is steaming." "No, it is not time yet," he would answer. "I have just been in the fields, and the leaves of the oak are quite

small still, not fully unfolded ; we may have a touch of frost yet, and that does not suit the oats. Sow when the leaves of the oak are like hare's ears, then the earth is ready to receive her children."

The world was full of signs for him, and we must believe that they had spoken truly to him during sixty years, for he trusted to them blindly. I remember that once there was a very wet spring, the rain fell day by day, till the fields were like a swamp, and the peasants began to fear for the roots of the spring corn. Anesimich alone remained calm ; and yet the matter was more important to him than to others, for his entire wealth was in his fields. He quietly assured his neighbours that the summer would be fine, that the land would dry up and that no harm would ensue ; and yet his only reason for this belief was, that on St. James's day, the 30th of April, the sun had shone out in a clear blue sky and not a cloud was seen all day. There was another sign in which he had great faith : he carefully observed the breaking up of the ice in the river. If the ice broke up early and well, it was a sure sign of a fine summer. His forecasts generally proved true, being founded on observation of facts ; he

could usually predict whether a good or evil fate awaited the peasant in the fields. He would mark out what day the ears of corn first showed, and could then unfailingly reckon, day by day, the stages of its growth and fix the date of harvest.

“What are you standing and staring at?” a neighbour would ask him with a smile; “are you looking after the horses?” “No, I am watching the geese.” “But why?” “They are all standing on one leg; we shall have a fall of snow soon, for sure. Look at the cranes too, how low they fly. It all means that we shall have an early winter.” Another time he expected a pleasant warm spring. “I was in the field just now,” he said, “and not a rook to be seen, and yet they arrived long ago! It must mean that they are sitting on their nests; it means they feel the warm weather is coming, and they are hurrying to bring forth their children.”

Another time there was a great drought, and all the village were bemoaning it; but Anesimich went about cheering their spirits. Trusting to some sign, he gaily glanced at the cornfield burnt by the sun: “What do you depend on?” he asked. “On the sun and the wind and the rain; they are all in

God's hand. He knows what to do, He settles everything—the days and years are ordered by Him. No drop of rain falls and no wind blows in the whole year but by His decree in due season." In the worst season when the sun had withered the corn, when hail and blight had fallen on the yellowing rye, he never despaired, never gave up hope, but preserved a kind of thoughtful, concentrated serenity. "Here we can do nothing," he would say; "we must pray to God to have pity on us in future years." And again he began observing signs, and trusted to them as before. In fact this observation of signs was one of his constant occupations, and by them he regulated his life. He would not begin any undertaking without first considering the signs which Nature, like a tender mother, has scattered everywhere for the instruction of man who owes his sustenance to her. Do we not hear the voice of God in Nature's tokens? And did not the old husbandman's life flow peacefully and free from anxiety because he continually listened to this mysterious voice?

XXIV

However much we are lovers of Nature, she can never speak to us as she did to the

peasant farmer. Fate has so ordered it, that there cannot be that close and intimate relation between us and Nature. We may be enthusiastic over her beauty, or we may indulge in dry theories and deductions from our observation of her, but in both cases are we not like men with a book open before them where they can indeed see the pictures, but cannot read the text?

The beauty of Nature appeals but little to the peasant; he does not reflect as we do on her mysteries. May we not say in passing, that he who begins to reflect and criticise an object, must as it were stand apart from it, and fancy himself something above it or separate from it.

But the peasant lives with Nature from his cradle, and without conscious study is familiar with her laws; his life is bound up with hers, his fate, his joys and sorrows spring from her. And Nature, recognising his childish weakness and dependence on her, casts away before him her veil of mystery; she lays bare her breast to him, and makes him a partaker of her secrets. While she preserves a dignified silence with the proud world, she speaks to the peasant in the budding leaf, in the rising sun, in the shining stars and the currents of

the winds, in the flight of birds, and in a thousand, thousand other voices which to us, proud citizens of the world, are but an unknown tongue. Those who are only occupied with the theoretical side of husbandry and of country life can never appreciate the poetry which lies in the close relation between the husbandman and the soil, between him and Nature. There are things which only show their luminous side to the heart that feels. If there are people who are conscious of this poetical side of Nature, why not allow that the peasant farmer is capable of recognising it? Because a man cannot give expression to his feelings in words, is he therefore devoid of such feelings? Are we to conclude that he is less capable of being touched by the poetry of Nature, because he is dumb in comparison with the educated man who is trained to express his feelings in words? How can we tell what thoughts rise in the farmer's mind as he goes out on a clear spring morning and looks at his cornfields? Does the smile on his face and the joy in his heart merely mean that he is calculating what the profit of his labour will amount to? Why may it not be that, looking at his fields, he remembers the autumn evening when he scattered the seed,

and the hearty prayer with which he commended his task into the hand of God? Then he remembers the joy of the family when the first rain came to water the seed, and the far greater joy when he saw the bare fields he had tilled covered with thick, luxurious green. Is there not true poetry in the lively remembrance of these peaceful joys?

XXV

Anesimich never held the post of *starost* or even of under-bailiff; he always begged as a special favour to be excused from these posts of authority. In spite of this the village folk respected him, and listened to him more than to the regular authorities.

In village life, though there is an outward coarseness, yet moral qualities are as carefully weighed as in a more refined society. And the influence of a strongly moral character is more observable in the former than in the latter. At every corner the villagers discuss the behaviour of everyone, and examine their relationships, because it is better to give one's daughter in marriage to a member of such a family, or to take a daughter-in-law for a son out of such a house. And all this is weighed and considered without reference to money matters. Public

opinion prevails over all, and governs their conduct more than they think.

No subject was discussed in the village assembly without Anesimich. He stood in a peculiar position as a farmer in a factory village, and, besides that, he was neither very rich, nor powerful, nor declamatory. And yet they listened to him, and his advice always carried great weight in the final decisions. It was the same in the most complicated affairs, and even in family disputes; what the old man said was taken as an oracle. I remember what happened on one occasion. Two brothers had to divide the goods they inherited; and anyone who has lived in a village knows how difficult it is to arrange this. How, for instance, can you divide a cottage between two men? Can you cut it in half? How can you balance the value of a horse against a few sheep, or of farming implements against domestic furniture. The division between the two brothers could not be satisfactorily arranged, even with the help of the village assembly or the bailiff's office. "Why not call in Anesimich and hear what he says?" suggested someone. The brothers and all present agreed to this. They sent for the old man, and in a little while he came. For a long time he refused to act,

saying that, whatever his decision was, it was sure to displease one brother, and so on. But they urged him all the more and claimed his judgment. "Then," said he, "in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and he crossed himself devoutly, and added in explanation that he prayed to God to help him to give righteous judgment, not considering man, but God. Then he settled the dispute after this fashion: all the farm buildings and cattle were to be divided in half, as "things acquired," but the corn-land was God's gift. God takes care of every man and sends corn enough for his need, therefore the corn-land must be divided according to the number of children in the family; and as there were three in one family and eight in the other, the latter should have more than the former. And so it was done.

XXVI

The life of the old farmer, which for many years flowed on as gently and quietly as sand in an hour-glass, was once disturbed by a great shock. The lot to furnish a conscript fell on his family; no one told him, they thought it best not, and he was quite unprepared. One night the recruiting party came to his cottage

and seized on one of his sons, the first they could find. When he described the scene afterwards, he said that his heart felt suddenly as heavy as lead, it seemed turned to stone. It was the unexpectedness of the blow which produced such a great effect. When he had collected his thoughts, he ran to the government office and begged that he might be allowed to choose which of his sons might join the army. The next day he took his three sons to the town. The scene is still remembered by the officials who were present in the court at the time; the roll of names was called, and a grey-headed man of sixty appeared in the doorway.

“Your honours,” he said, “the lot has fallen on my family to furnish a conscript. I have three sons, and I tried to choose out one of them, but I cannot—they are all equally dear to me; I must leave the choice to you.”

Then there came forward three young men, one handsomer than another; two stood on the right of the old man, and the third on his left. He embraced them one after another, placing his hand on the head of each in turn.

“You are all dear to me; all of you are good sons—all,” and his breathing seemed choked in

his breast. He stood still, shook his head, sighed deeply, and burst into tears.

The bystanders, touched by his emotion, tried to comfort him. He begged that the choice might be made by lot. Taking three copper coins from a purse, he gave one to each, then looked carefully at each coin and made a mark with his teeth on it, and told them to throw them into a hat.

"Your honours," he said, turning to the company around, "I see you are sorry for them. It will be better to ask someone to draw the lot, someone who has not known us."

They called a soldier. The old man said to him :

"When you have drawn the lot do not show it to anyone, but give it to me."

The lot was drawn. The old man took the coin from the soldier, went to the window, looked at it, trembled, but recovered himself, made the sign of the cross, and returned to his children.

"Basil," he cried, turning to the youngest. "Basil, my darling, come here," and again he put his hand on his son's head, looked at him silently for a moment, and at last uttered these words :

"You have been—yes, you have been always

a good son to me . . . be a good soldier now of our Czar." He embraced and blessed him, then covering his face with his hand, went to the door and wept like a child.

XXVII

LAST HOURS

Absorbed in memories of the past, and striving to bring more clearly before my eyes the venerable figure of the old husbandman, I passed through the fields, and was suddenly surprised to find myself beside Saul and his wife on the slope of the hill, whence the village and its surroundings could be seen.

The sun had nearly reached the horizon, the valley was full of shadow, but in places where the ground rose slightly or there was a clearing in the wood, bright patches of light appeared standing out in greater contrast from the dark blue shadows which surrounded them, while the tops of some trees here and there in the valley catching the light appeared like golden islands floating in a sea of blue. In the midst of these mingled lights and shadows. The village street was a band of light as the rays of the setting sun fell strongly on one side of it, making the windows glow like fires.

I could observe unusual movement in the village as I looked down on it. Dark spots were moving, and the long shadows beside them added to the weirdness of the scene.

“Faster, come faster,” cried Saul’s wife, keeping her eyes fixed on the village. She seemed about to speak again, but pointed in front, and ran hastily to the bridge.

Meanwhile Saul walked on, with his head drooping on his breast, his eyes fixed on the ground, his brows twitching. Absorbed in his one thought, he seemed not to notice his wife’s absence, but he quickened his steps as he neared his goal.

We reached the village just as the cattle were being driven in from the pastures. The herd met us, and a crowd of women, girls and children continually crossed our path, adding to the confusion in the street; some of them seemed pressing to a cottage at the end of the street, where a crowd had already assembled near the door. The lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep, and the cries of the women driving the animals prevented our hearing the remarks of the passers-by, but sounds of lamentation seemed to meet us in the distance from the cottage.

“Never mind your horse, let it go; the old

man is dying," cried a woman as she hurried by us.

Saul hastened his steps.

The sound of wailing and cries came clearer from the cottage, and when the door was opened we could almost hear words and distinguish voices. But the noisy crowd near the door grew hushed as we approached, and they looked at Saul with curious eyes. By the door of the cattle-shed two cows were lowing and a half-dozen sheep were bleating; in the general confusion their masters had forgotten them.

Saul stopped his horse and took a step forward as if to open the door; then he turned to the horses, and would have unharnessed them, but at that moment a cry of despair broke from the house and his strength failed him—his arms dropped, he shook his head sadly, and turned to the little side door of the cottage which led to the front room, the crowd hastily making way for him.

XXVIII

I had never before been present at a death-bed. Death makes a special impression on us when it takes away a familiar figure. Besides the feeling of grief which springs up at the thought of the parting for ever, we are deeply

stirred by the thought that this lifeless body was talking with us only yesterday; we heard his voice, which still echoes in our ears, we shared with him our thoughts and feelings, we saw life pulsing in his veins—and suddenly, all is silenced, arrested, ended for ever, and never, never more will be reanimated. It is sad. . . .

I was disconcerted when I entered the passage to find it crowded with weeping folk. From time to time, above the murmur of the prayers which were being recited, a piercing cry burst forth, which seemed to penetrate one's heart. The room was still more crowded; it was not possible to move. Women, with children in their arms or at the breast, were standing even on the benches; the stove and the loft were strewn with people, all moaning and weeping. The noise was so great that you could hardly hear yourself speak. You saw in the crowd people with swollen eyes and open mouths uttering shrill sounds. The greater part of the women clung to each other, leaning their heads on each other's shoulders and swaying backwards and forwards sadly in rhythmic motion.

I was not at that time aware that it is a custom among the peasants to fill the house

of the dying man and express their respect for him by loud wailings. At first I felt much annoyed. "Why are they here?" I asked myself; "who wants them to come? The man is still alive, and they are lamenting him as if he were already dead. It is hard enough for him to die, without their continually reminding him of his past happiness and the family he is leaving fatherless." But then a thought suddenly struck me—all this haste to lament, this premature grief, does it not show how little accustomed the village folk are to cherish hope? They are not wont to deceive themselves with illusive dreams, they resign themselves to sorrow as a thing which is inevitable. And I became more reconciled to these loud manifestations of grief when I remembered how many dear to him were assembled, and what a terrible loss the death of the old man would be to his family.

However much I pressed forward into the room, more and more heads rose before me, and further still, in a dark corner, appeared the glimmering light of a wax candle fastened to the sacred picture. And now the first thing I distinguished were the knees of the dying man; a cold shiver passed over me. I know not why the sight of the sharp outline of those

immovable, uplifted knees, affected me more than the sight of the man himself would have done. At the feet of the farmer sat his aged wife, as well stricken in years as himself. Her arms were round the necks of her two married daughters, who were sobbing violently. Her feeble head rested first on the shoulder of one and then on that of the other. The handkerchief covering her head threw a deep shadow over her face. At times a weak moan escaped from the sunken breast of the old woman. She herself seemed to be dying. Beside her stood her eldest son, as fine a young man as Saul, but with a darker complexion. Leaning with his right elbow against the wall, he covered his face with his left hand, and stood there immovable; only at times deep sighs issued from his powerful chest. Saul was kneeling on the other side, his curly head lay on his bare arm, which was stretched out on the neighbouring bench. They were all overcome with grief, and gathered round the old man as if he were already a senseless corpse; but in the meanwhile the object of their grief was still struggling for life: his eyes were closed, but from time to time his chest rose and he breathed heavily.

XXIX

He lay under the holy picture, on a heap of straw on a bench. His head rested on a sheaf of oats. His long silver hair was not in disorder, as of one who convulsively and hopelessly wrestles with death ; it lay in long waving locks down his wasted cheeks, which had the many wrinkles and hard sunburnt look which showed that the skin had been exposed to heat, and cold, and rain, and wind, in an outdoor life. I stood a few paces from him, and could observe his features clearly. Their expression was in strong contrast to the faces of the crowd around me ; in the latter bitter grief and despair, but the countenance of the old man was full of peace. I never saw, before or since, such a mild and gentle expression. It was evident that he was still conscious ; some thought shone through his closed eyelids and lighted up his features. He must have heard all that went on around him—the laments of kinsfolk, the words of parting, the heartrending cries of his two daughters begging him not to leave them, the loud weeping of Saul, and the bitter sobs of his eldest son, but the thought that brightened his face did not, evidently, relate to this world. No frown of inward

grief marred the serenity of his brow. He lay as if while drowsing in a field, after a hard morning's work, and dropping gradually asleep he heard the song of the larks pouring forth from the heaven above.

"Is this then death?" I asked myself as I watched his countenance. I had never seen death before, but it was less painful to me than the sight of the grief around me, the lamentations and despairing cries. The terrible idea of death which my imagination had formerly pictured disappeared gradually, as I gazed at the calm, peaceful face of the husbandman. I thought I saw in the flickering light, which the taper threw where the dying man lay, not a threatening, awful form—no, but an angel of light, who with a welcoming smile stretched out his hands and softly waved his white resplendent wings.

XXX

As I was watching the old man's face, to catch any signs that showed he was conscious of the grief around him, there suddenly rose a lamentation from the further part of the cottage, and the voices of women crying out: "Let him pass, let Uncle Karp pass; he wishes to bid farewell."

I stood aside as others did, and a little grey-headed old man came forward. He was a brother of the farmer, and though several years younger he was already broken down by age. He had given up field work long ago, and struggled on from day to day, but lately he spent most of his time lying on the stove, or now and then he would sun himself on a warm bank outside the house. His small face was furrowed with wrinkles; it seemed as if every day of toil had left its mark on him. His legs shook under him, his hands trembled, his head, which had only a few tufts of hair left, nodded from side to side. He was evidently shaking, not from emotion, but from weakness. His dim eyes fixed on his brother showed no signs of agitation. He drew nearer, crossed himself slowly, and said :

“ Ah, Ivan, Ivan, I thought you would stay longer with us ; you are leaving us too soon, Ivan ! ”

He was interrupted by the passionate lamentation of the two daughters of the dying man. They suddenly tore themselves away from their mother, who fell powerless at her husband's feet, and rushed forward to embrace their father. Saul and his eldest brother sobbed loudly. The peaceful thought which had lighted up the face

of the dying man seemed suddenly driven away, and a gloomy expression now lay upon his features. It seemed as if the voices of his family had at last penetrated his heart, and for a moment he was brought back to this everyday world. But his eyes remained closed, and his chest rose in slow and regular breathing.

"Enough, women, enough of this," said Karp, gently pushing his nieces aside. "Saul, Peter, you should keep them quiet; it is hard enough without their making it harder for him to leave them, and these wailings disturb him; they should give them up, there will be time enough afterwards for regret."

Peter and Saul took their sisters and withdrew to their father's feet. The face of the dying man grew gradually sadder, and his breathing was more laboured.

"Ah, brother Ivan," suddenly exclaimed Karp, and his voice trembled more, "at what a season you are leaving us. Rise up and look at the fields; spring is at the door, and we must begin to plough."

At these words an expression of deep grief stole over the face of the dying man, his eyelids trembled, and two tears gathered in his eyes and rolled down his furrowed cheeks, where they lay as if congealed. . . .

The bright current of a stream for many years enlivened a dell; it gurgled gently, reflecting the blue sky and the green trees and the peaceful scene around. But time at length opened a rift in the bed of the stream, the water slowly diminished; its surface grew more and more troubled, and at last the stream vanished altogether, leaving only a dark, empty bed, where the sun's rays never shone. And thus life, in its unseen course, forsook the farmer. His breathing grew slower, and a deathly pallor overspread his features. Hitherto his soul had seemed to hover on the border line between life and death; although growing gradually weaker it was agitated and troubled by the grief around, but now it was passing the fateful boundary. . . .

The countenance of the old man regained its calm brightness, and it seemed too that again, in the flickering light the lamp shed on its pillow, I saw an angel with a smile stretch forth his hands in welcome, and gently wave his white resplendent wings. . . .

XXXI

Two days later I went to pay the last tokens of respect to the farmer. I hardly remember any morning so clear and beautiful. There

was not a cloud in the sky; a soft golden light was diffused on the surrounding landscape; there seemed to be no corner where the sun's rays did not penetrate, and yet the air was cool and gave a freshness to field and hill and wood, while the dew sparkled everywhere. Not a leaf moved, only at times one could hear drops of dew falling from one leaf to another. The birds sang loudly, insects buzzed, the air was full of twittering sounds. Every winged creature seemed to be making holiday this morning. Grasshoppers leapt gaily like sparks from a fire, and on both sides of the road which led from the house to the village the larks poured forth their song.

But the scene that awaited me contrasted strongly with the cheerful morn. As I got to the village, the bier was being carried out of the house. I saw a great crowd of people, and behind them the bier with its white pall shining in the sun, and swaying from side to side as if it would send farewell greetings to the cottages and green cornfields. The funeral procession was followed by a crowd of persons and of carts filled with weeping women, whose cries drowned the creaking of the wheels. They wound their way down to a meadow where the road turned and led to the next

parish. On the way down I met one of the oldest inhabitants of the village. He was evidently too weak to accompany the bier any further, but he followed it with his eyes and crossed himself.

“ Good-bye, Anesimich—good-bye ; we shall all soon join you there.” He waved his hand and returned to his cottage.

The funeral procession paused at the foot of the hill which hid the next village. At this spot two tall and ancient poplars stood on each side of the road, thick bushes surrounded them ; they marked the boundary between our parish and the next. It was the custom to take the last farewell of the dead here. The lamentations and cries now increased. The people crowded round the bier which rested on the ground. Everyone wished to bid farewell to the farmer.

I drew nearer, but I could not see the face of the old man : it was covered ; only his brown, sunburnt hands appeared. Everyone went up to the bier, and bowed low and kissed these brown and hallowed fingers which during seventy years had only moved to labour hard, or to make the sign of the cross. At length the leave-taking was over. The bier raised on the shoulders of the bearers shone again in

the sun. The relations, wearied out by grief and tears, seated themselves in the carts. We mounted the hill and gradually left behind the crowd which stood by the poplars, and followed the bier with their eyes till it was hidden from their sight.

XXXII

At midday I returned by the same road. The landscape around was as bright as before; the birds sang gaily. But the cheerfulness which we find at times prevailing in Nature is of a totally different kind to the gaiety of a town, for it neither wearies the head nor disturbs the mind. On the contrary, the brightness around you seems to clear your soul and your mind.

When I reached the two ancient poplars which had so lately witnessed the farewell scene, no one was there, everyone had gone long ago. Only the buzz of insects was heard under the boughs which caught the sunlight. The drowsy silence of a hot May noon had fallen on woods and hills. Going a few steps further, I saw among the bushes, which grew on the right side of the road, an armful of straw, and on it the broken sherds of a pitcher. They were the last remains of the deceased. The bundle of straw had served him for his last

resting-place; out of the pitcher had been poured the water to wash his cold corpse.

I do not know what lies at the root of the custom to leave these objects on the road by which the dead are carried for the last time, but there is something touching in this custom. . . . I stood for a long time under the tall poplars with my mind full of sad thoughts in the midst of the bright landscape. What fleeting memorials are these of a long life, I thought as I gazed at the potsherds and the straw; in a few weeks there will be scarcely a trace of them; the wind will carry away the straw; and the passers-by will tread the potsherds into dust. But what does it matter, need we trouble ourselves about these frail material memorials? Has not the old husbandman left another and far more enduring witness to his memory? There is something better than these visible signs. There is another kind of memorial, which is founded on the impressions left by the spiritual qualities, by the moral character of the man we mourn. Such a memorial is the loftiest poetry of the moral world—and the old husbandman deserved to be thus remembered. His gentle, peaceful figure, the outward vesture of a pure and beautiful soul, remains ever enshrined in the

memory of those who loved and honoured him, of those who lived with him and could appreciate his worth. Is not this the best recompense a man can have, the best memorial he can leave behind him?

Yes, although his life appears to us who live in the great world so insignificant and humble, the old husbandman deserved to be thus remembered. His life had been spent worthily in incessant labour, in fulfilling his duties with all his might. There is no need, nor is this the place, to analyse his social position, nor the peaceful sphere of his labours, and the humble results that followed them. In our sketch of the husbandman, it is moral character which has interested us, not his status in the world. It has been our aim to show that whoever fulfils his duties conscientiously in the humblest sphere which may be allotted to him, may truly be called "a good and faithful servant who has done his work with all his might."

Then let the straw rot whereon he once lay, let the potsherds be trodden in the road, let his bones return to their dust, yet his memory shall not perish from my heart, nor from the hearts of those whom he helped with his counsel and his example. The memory of the old husbandman still lives, honoured and respected by the humble village folk.

THE FISHERMAN

THE FISHERMAN

WHAT a lively picture of Russian scenery we get from Grigorovitch in his story "The Fisherman," the following extract will show :—

"I spent the first years of my childhood on the Volga; my memory can no longer retrace the picturesque hills and woods and villages which are reflected in its bright and beneficent waters. Fate cast my lot in another direction, and brought me to another river; and since then I have never been separated from the Oka. I do not know whether fate did me a good or a bad turn by this change, but I know that having lived twenty-five years beside the Oka I have never regretted it. I quickly grew to feel we were kinsfolk and to regard her as my second home. Do not accuse me of partiality—in some sense partiality is excusable—do not blame me if the shores of the Oka, the country round it, and the little streams falling into it seem to me more beautiful, more picturesque than other shores, than other streams and districts in Russia.

“I will not attempt to give in detail the superior qualities of one river over the other; I will not, for instance, boast that the Oka is vaster than the Volga. I will, indeed, confess that in wide and fascinating expanses, in life and stir and animation, the Volga is supreme. The Oka is narrower, quieter, smaller, and abounds less in fish, especially in our part. She only becomes animated in the season of flood. For the rest of the year, and above all in summer, you will rarely see on her an endless caravan of boats, no fleet of great ships and barques will pass before you, heaped up with the riches of the whole country round. You will rarely hear the clear echoing cries and the gay songs of the raftsmen cheering your heart, and making the river resound. The paddles of no steamer trouble the surface of the waters of the Oka. You may see a solitary barque reflected in her as in a mirror, with the tall bearded steersman in his round sheepskin cap. Here, too, is reflected the straw hat which serves the labourers as shelter from sultry heat and rain, with the long white tow-horse, quietly munching its meagre allowance of hay, and patiently awaiting its appointed task. The fire which at night is burning on the boat is reflected in the glassy surface of the

water. In the sultry days of summer the Oka is enlivened by a few white gulls darting about in all directions. The sandbanks which sometimes appear in the middle of the river are strewn with small shells as white as sugar, and are covered in part by the sweet-smelling leaves of the dock, and swarm with land-rails and woodcock ; while here and there stands a grey heron on one leg, bending its neck in a picturesque attitude. In the evening complete silence reigns ; not a ripple on the river, as if even the current of the stream had stayed its flow. The ridge of high cliffs on the shore is so faithfully reflected in the river that it is not possible to distinguish between the water and the dry land, which seems but a continuation of the river. The gloom of the surface is broken by circles ; sportive fish begin to play, darting here and there like silver threads or sparks. Then softly, without a sound to disturb the silence, the fisherman launches his boat from the shore and hastens to cast his nets.

“I do not know how you would feel, reader, but I love the solemn calm of this broad expanse of waters enclosed between lofty and picturesque shores. In the presence of Nature a susceptible mind feels at times inexpressibly serene and happy. The soul seems then to be

transformed into a deep, transparent, and calm lake, reflecting clearly the blue sky spread over it and all the surrounding world. But the slightest sound suffices to disturb the sweet reverie, as the least touch will trouble the sleeping surface of a lake. For a time everything has seemed hushed and then a circle trembles on the smooth mirror, for indeed the silence is never long unbroken, and some faint, chance sound is able to transmit to the soul mysterious but harmonious melodies.

“It is this tranquillity which reigns for the most part of the year over the Oka which to my eyes is its great charm. And especially do I admire its high banks as I float down the current from Carpukov to Kolomna. Now there is a dense mass of hazel bushes or young oaks, now bright hillocks slope down to the water, then come ploughed fields chequered like a chessboard; sometimes the bank is cut through by ravines whose depth makes you more conscious of the height of the cliffs above the river. The scene is constantly changing; it is as if you stood still and a vast panorama was unrolled before you. Here and there a village is perched on a high green ridge or a gentle slope, and far away winding lanes appear as if drawn with the fine point of

a brush. Here and there gleam out white monasteries and modest village churches with green roofs and crosses shining in the sun. At times there is an opening in the deep sandy cliffs, and in strong contrast we catch a glimpse of a green and smiling valley. Petulant brooks and small rivers, like the Smedra, sometimes overshadowed by willows, wind their way picturesquely through bright green hollows covered with young birches; sometimes the whole shore is a compact dark-bluish wall of pine forest which continues for miles. Here and there on the sandy banks you catch sight of fishermen's huts, with gaffs and boat-hooks leaning against them and nets spread out, and upturned boats with their well-tarred ribs. In some places the cliff, undermined by the current, hangs over the water, and shows layers of chalk and clay and sand pierced by the holes of martins' and swallows' nests. In such places these birds appear in swarms. Hovering above them in the immense expanse of sky you will infallibly see the royal eagle. He spreads out his smoke-coloured wings, jagged at the edge, raises his tail, and, giving a faint scream like a child, he remains motionless in the air or descends in wide circles on his prey.

“ In some places the banks retreat, forming

an amphitheatre with rich pasture, adorned by a few patriarchal oaks, under whose shade the cattle of the neighbouring village seek shelter. But one cannot describe it all. In a word, it is a striking and magnificent panorama which awaits an artist and a poet to do it justice; yet we cannot pretend to be that artist or poet.

“But do not imagine that the meadows on the opposite shore have not their own especial charm. There is a season of the year when they seem more beautiful and varied than the high cliffs opposite. This season is near St. Peter’s Day. I must mention in passing that these meadows form a tract as big as ten small German duchies; they form an unbroken ribbon winding through several provinces—in a word, they extend as far as the river Oka itself. In breadth these meadows extend on an average about eight miles, and end where the forests and the villages begin. The villages cannot be built nearer the river on account of the floods. In July this district is covered with a rich crop of grass, in which the peasant children can be concealed as in a wood. A thousand sweet-smelling flowers and plants pour forth their fragrance into the evening air. In sultry noontide this variegated flowery sea appears to heave and overflow from end to

end, though no breeze makes a stalk tremble. Hither, at St. Peter's tide, flock the peasants of the surrounding villages, with a crowd of haymakers hired at this blessed season by the inhabitants of Komareb, Gov, Bolstov, Azov, and others. Among this simple folk the hay harvest is a festival. All appear there in full Sunday costume. If you could collect all the bright red skirts, handkerchiefs, and many-coloured shirts and trimmings which appear in hay time you might cover the country for fifty miles around. The people come in bands, whole families together. Each group settles by its own carts, its own cauldron. For three weeks the place is alive with at least a thousand persons camping here. You look up at night from the cliffs towards the meadows of the opposite shore, and you see the brushwood fires twinkling like stars as far away as the horizon. When the sun rises the meadows are a scene of activity and animation. The line of haymakers stretches out, and the scythes sweep on with harmonious sound; they march on towards the river, laying low to right and left great swathes of rich grass, mingled with clover, sweet sainfoin, and a hundred other flowers. While the men mow the women and children follow to toss the hay with their forks,

and heap it up into cocks ; this goes on for a fortnight, and the while you enjoy the holiday feeling, you love the meadows, the hum of talk and song of a thousand voices rising from them in what appears to be a great family festival. When night has gone and the fires are extinguished, and dawn begins to light in the east, and the silver crescent of the moon is vanishing on the horizon, the songs are yet not silences, they seem as endless as the vast space around ; they resound maybe to far-off provinces, are caught up perchance by haymakers on the shores of the Volga, and carried as far as the Caspian Sea. And if these songs and these meadows do not stir your feelings and charm and touch your heart, I advise you to beware lest your soul become as a stone, incapable of caring for aught save the petty turns of a card game or similar trifles."

After this summer scene of haymaking what a contrast is this description of the breaking up of the river ice, when the long Russian winter is over and the fisherman can again launch his boat and pursue his calling.

"Gleb and his sons had seen signs of approaching spring, and were on the alert for the desired thaw. It was at midnight that a sudden crash was heard ; it was accompanied by blows as if

a thousand great hammers were striking together on the shores and on the icy surface of the river. This crash, which sounded like the sudden overthrow of a thousand cottages, changed in a moment to a deep murmur which continually increased in sound; it echoed through the night like a raging wind which throws down venerable oaks and tears off roofs. It seemed as if violent storm had struck the surrounding country. Old Gleb started. His ears had long been on the watch. He jumped out of the sledge (where he slept), made the sign of the cross, and hurried to the gate.

“Through the thick darkness of the night, increased by swiftly flying clouds, the sharp eyes of the fisherman distinguished a dull white streak in the distance. It was the river gleaming, as it foamed and roared like a wild beast escaping from bondage to liberty. A strong west wind blew; its gusts increased the rapid flow of the stream. The rushing sound of water mingled with the crash of ice which ever and anon broke away from the shores; the din and clatter, the resounding blows of blocks of ice, following one on another, echoed through the night air, which grew colder every moment. It had come at last, the long wished for, long waited for, rising of the flood. The time had

come at last, as joyful for the fisherman as the first warm spring day is for the ploughman when he hastens to the field and, shading his eyes with his hand to preserve them from the golden rays of the rising sun, sees with gladness the rich emerald-green stalks of the winter corn covering the field.

“Gleb could not take his eyes away from the ever whiter growing streaks of river. He listened to the tinkling of the ice as if he could from the sound foretell if good luck or ill luck would come to his fishing, and he stroked his beard thoughtfully; even the rising flood did not seem to make him rejoice as it used to do formerly. In old days he would not have stood thus quietly in one spot; he would long ago have roused his wife and children with a loud voice, and they would all have bestirred themselves. Everyone in the house, great and small, would have rushed to the shore to watch the river breaking up and to thank God for His mercy. ‘Ah, Mother Oka, flow down, flow down, our nourishing mother—April is close at hand.’

“Thus in old days would Gleb have cried out, while his eyes would have wandered restlessly from the river to his boat, and his fingers would have itched to seize his nets and go and

try his luck. But now he stood on one spot and musingly stroked his beard in silence, as if no river flowed by. He stood thus for some time, and then turned to his own yard, and wrapping himself in his cloak, he lay down again in his sledge without waking up his family. But sleep fled from him; he lay with his eyes open as if some thought harassed him; then he rolled from side to side as if pushed by some force outside himself. At times he raised his head and listened attentively to the sound of the rushing river, which was swelling and broadening every moment, and roared and groaned with increasing volume of sound. At last the fisherman got up, and slipping his cloak on his shoulders went to the gate and stood there all night till the dawn came. Then he could wait no longer, but going quickly through the yard he knocked loudly with his fist against the wattled doors of the barn and the rooms where his wife and children slept, and cried out in an excited voice which seemed to grow more cheerful: 'Get up, get up, you sluggards, you have slept enough. Listen, the river leaps for joy; rouse up, rouse up!' A moment after, the family of the fisherman appeared, and they all hastened to the gate.

"By morning the river had submerged the

shore, and was evidently spreading further and further over the meadows, which seemed to retreat to the horizon. The stream carried blocks of ice on its surface, dwarf willows which grew on the flat shore, while here and there the hollow trunks of white willows raised their bare branches, and looked like deformed naked men whose hair stood on end from terror. Huge masses of ice rushed along as swiftly as if they were chips cast into the river, bearing on their surface layers of earth from the winter roads. Planks and stacks of hay which had been left during the winter on the ice, and which had not been timely brought to the shore, were carried down the stream; and ancient trees torn up from the ground were raised topsy-turvy, only showing their hairy roots above the blocks of ice. Everything showed clearly that the river had reached its highest level. Sometimes the ice barred the river's flow, and the compressed masses heaped on one another groaned and creaked till the noise filled the country round. And then suddenly the river would break through the obstacles and would flow freely for a mile; in these clear spaces a hut or cabin would appear, carried away on an ice floe. Slanting down on one side it threatened to be engulfed,

and to carry down with it a dog who now jumped about as if mad, now stood on the edge of the ice and raising his tail threw back his head and howled in the most despairing way. Then would often follow a solitary pole standing straight out of the water, and perched on it a crow, swaying from side to side with the pole, looked round with curiosity and seemed to quietly enjoy its watery journey. But suddenly the scene would change, and the river appeared covered with a million white fragments of ice; like a flock of frightened sheep they rushed along in little groups, being caught sometimes, as if confused, in tall tufts of willows, the tops of which, heavy with mire, bent trembling over the noisy roaring current. The country round had changed into a sea.

“The fisherman and his family spent almost the whole morning by the river. After breakfast the sons of Gleb and his adopted son, headed by the old man himself, started forth with boat-hooks, and scattering themselves along the shore caught the floating wood with which each flood generously provided them.

“Two days later at dawn the whole family, great and small, moved into their new cottage.

“In the middle of the table rose a great pile of rye cakes, and by it stood the sacred

picture (icon), leaning against a carved lime-wood salt-cellar; this icon had come down to Gleb from his father, a fisherman like himself. Gleb, whose dignified countenance was now impressive in its triumphant calm, raised his voice in prayer, while his wife, his sons and their wives, and even the little children, all knelt beside him. When the prayer was ended the icon was put in its own place, and a yellow wax candle was lighted before it; this was meant to burn the whole time of their first fishing expedition. After this, all those present crossed themselves devoutly. Then Gleb and all his family went down to the shore. The boat had been launched the evening before, the great net spread out on posts stretched almost the whole width of the great landing-place. The sun rose with majesty over the boundless expanse of waters, with golden slanting beams, and the pure cloudless sky spread a rosy tint over the heads of the fishermen. Everything around seemed to smile and to promise success. Without delay the men seized the net, threw it into the boat and began their work. It was a joy to escape into the fresh air after being cooped up for five months in the smoke-grimed stuffy cottages.

“The Oka no longer appeared a wild medley

of ice and torn-up roots and trees floundering in confusion in the muddy troubled waves; it was now in full flood, the water had quieted down and become more transparent. The river was an even silver sheet, here and there streaked with blue, stretching seven versts from shore to shore, and its surface seemed as immovable as that of a lake in calm weather. Here and there in the distance the roofs of some fishermen's huts appeared like dark spots above the surface of the water, which had covered them. In some places the leafless tops of oaks peeped out above the flood, and casting their images on the smooth mirror of the stream looked like small islands, while only a thin silver streak beside them revealed the swiftness of the current. The boats of our fishermen had now become mere specks, and their voices were lost in the distance. Only flights of birds enlivened the scene. Here were blackbirds, starlings, wild duck, martins and jackdaws flying in haste over the river; white-breasted gulls and sea-mews suddenly appeared, no one knew from whence, and their hoarse cry was carried over the waters. The blue-winged crane added his voice, and myriads of swallows flitted here and there in the fresh transparent air, and cutting the water with

their wings left a circle which was immediately carried down by the swift flow of the river. Meanwhile the sun rose higher and higher, scattering a sheaf of golden beams in the sky, as if the hand of God was stretching forth from the boundless horizon and blessing the morning. The river remained at full flood for a few days, then little by little, as if wearying of its importance, it seemed overcome by a pleasant drowsiness and began to retire into its own bed. The meadows were now covered by a viscous fertilising mud, and were soon crowded with folk from the neighbouring villages with tubs and pails and sieves. All were busy—men, women, and children—collecting the fish which were left in the hollows of the meadows by the swiftly vanishing water.

“The flood had now driven away gloom from Gleb’s countenance, and the first catch of fish was so good that they could only be grateful to God for His gifts. Their luck had indeed been astonishing.

“‘God is the Creator,’ said Gleb. ‘He has blessed us, and we must show our gratitude. And how? by prayer and by labour. God means us to labour. Now, boys, what are you waiting for? Make haste; we have no more the long winter nights, a summer night is but

an hour, so bestir yourselves.' This was said in the evening, the day after the river had sunk to its usual level. The sun had long set, the stars were shining. The young men stood on the shore round their father, who was preparing for torchlight fishing.

"'Now, Vanushka, run to the house and bring the torch,' cried Gleb, as he fixed a rough iron grating on the bow of the boat, and put some pitch on it. 'The net has done its work—a good servant; now we must use the torch, we must neglect nothing which can help us. The night is still; we could not have a better.' As he said this he examined the point of the spear with which he was going to strike the fish attracted by the light. Vanushka soon appeared carrying a lighted lantern under his coat; soon the pitch began to burn, and threw a bright light round, which lit up the landing place and the faces of the fishermen with a ruddy glare.

"'Now, father,' said Peter, 'how shall we divide the work?'

"Gleb, now quite cheerful, promptly answered:

"'You, Peter, stay by me in the bow with your spear; now don't begin to yawn. . . . You, Grishka and Vanushka, sit at the oars, but

only row when I tell you. The fish are asleep ; we must not disturb them till the moment comes. Is the skiff fastened securely to the stern ?' Grishka said it was. 'Now hurry up, you, Vashka '—he turned to his second son who was holding the boat with his boat-hook —'go to the stern. Now, are we all in our places ?'

" 'All,' answered the young men together.

" 'Hush ! Don't shout, speak with your eyes ; talk in a whisper. Off—give way.' Basil let go the hook and jumped into the stern. 'Now the boat is off and we are in God's hand,' cried Gleb gaily, as the boat pushing from the shore got into the current of the stream.

"Meanwhile Aunt Anna and the daughters-in-law sat on the bank and watched the light which burnt brightly in the dark night, and was so clearly reflected in the water that it seemed as if two fiery eyes gleamed from the depth of the river, while the meadows and nearer shore were wrapped in gloom. Sometimes for a moment the light disappeared, and with it vanished the boat, the skiff fastened to it, and the fishermen. But fresh pieces of pitch were put on the grating, and the red flame leaped up again over the river. Then the watching women saw again revealed out

of the gloom the moving outlines of the boats and the fishermen, the tall figures of Peter and Gleb with spears in their upraised right hands, bending over the edge of the boat and the lighted circle repeated in the river.

“Gleb was right; the torchlight fishing was as successful as that with the net.”

GRIGOROVITCH.

THE UPAS TREE

THE UPAS TREE

IN the dry, bare desert, on the ground, red-hot in the sultry air, the upas tree like a terrible sentry stands alone in all the world.

The nature of the thirsty steppes begat it in the day of her anger, and gave it the verdure in its deadly branches, and poured poison into its roots. The poison trickles through its roots, and melts at midday from the heat, and towards evening it congeals in thick transparent resin.

No bird flies to it, nor does the tiger visit it ; only the dark tornado rushes on the tree of death and scatters after the pestilence. And if a wandering cloud waters its thick foliage, the branches are poisonous, and bitter rain flows off into the sand.

But a man with despotic mien sent his servant to the upas tree, and he obediently hurried on the road, and in the morning returned with the poison. He brought the fatal resin, a bough with fading leaves, and sweat in cold streams poured from his forehead.

He brought the poison—he grew weak, and lay on a heap of bast under the arch of the hut, and died, a poor slave, at the feet of his powerful master.

Then the prince soaked his obedient arrows in the poison, and with them sent destruction to his neighbours in foreign countries.

PUSHKIN.

CRADLE SONGS

CRADLE SONGS

I

Howl not, O wind, and ye fir-trees
Do not rustle your branches,
For my little one sleeps sweetly in his cradle,
And thou, O storm of God, wake not my
child,
But let the black clouds fly away hence.
There may be many a storm in days to come,
And trouble may often disturb thy sleep,
But the fir branches shall not moan,
And the storm shall be hushed,
And thy mother's prayer
Shall watch over thy sleep.
To-morrow thou shalt wake and open thine eyes,
And the sun and love and caresses shall greet
thee.

II

Sleep, darling baby, sleep,
Dream in thy slumber deep,
For nurses three
I call for thee ;
I call the sun, I call the wind,
Come, eagle, come, my babe to mind ;

But the eagle home would fly,
And the sun set in the sky.
Three nights were gone, the wind rushed past,
“Art here,” the mother cried, “at last?
Hast driven high the mighty ocean,
Or stirred the stars to swifter motion?”
“The sea is calm,” the wind replied,
“The golden stars in heaven abide;
My task it was glad watch to keep,
And rock thy darling babe asleep.”

POEMS OF NEKRASOV

POEMS OF NEKRASOV

THE poems of Nekrasov take one through melancholy scenes of peasant life. Some of them were written before the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, but even after that date there was much suffering among the poor, which is faithfully reproduced in these poems. The feeling of the insecurity of life, of being liable to lawless oppression, is shown in "The Nightingales," while the setting of the poem is charming in its suggestiveness.

We seem to see the mother taking her children to the wood to listen to the song of the nightingale. The sudden burst of spring is doubly welcome after the harshness of a Russian winter; and the song of birds is cheering in contrast to the howling, wailing wind driving the snow before it and blinding the traveller. Here is a prose version of the original.

THE NIGHTINGALES

A MOTHER sat rocking her youngest boy, and she said to the older children: "Go and play

for a while, and then when I have finished mending this frock I will see after the cow, and then we will lead out the horse to the pasture, and I will take you to the wood and we will listen to the nightingale's song. There are as many of them as there are mushrooms in a basket—('Don't hinder me, you little rogue!'). —Ah, there is no gayer place, children, in spring than the wood, where on a holiday everyone goes, young and old, at eventide. The pretty girls sing in the meadow, and the drunken village folk jest, but in the wood, my darlings, the choir of nightingales sing and warble sweeter and louder than the talk and laughter of the choral dancers. It is lovely and dear to us all, but once—('Klim, don't worry Sasha!')—the nightingales almost forsook our grove for ever. For our nightingales would fetch a price, and many of them were caught; others were frightened away by the nets, and they passed us by and would not return.

“And it came to pass one spring, so your grandfather said, that the grove was mute; no winged guests came there, and great grief fell on the peasants. For on a holiday they went to walk in the meadow; but the holiday was no holiday—the peasants tore their beards.

And they settled among themselves—God also put it into their hearts—that for all time no nets or snares should be set, neither in that meadow nor in that wood.

“And little by little the nightingales began again to frequent our wood; and now, my darlings, there is no place that they love more. Thither no one for many a year has come with nets; a severe prohibition is handed down from grandfather to grandson.

“And this is why in spring the whole wood is alive with song, and that during the day a new choir begins, and at night the village is lulled to sleep with their song, and at daybreak they wake us with their singing. It is good thus to remind you; and God forbid that you should set nets there. For truly you must give the poor nightingales some ‘place of safety.’”

The second boy teased the cat, the youngest clung to his mother’s neck, but the eldest in a grave voice asked :

“But, Mother, is there no such safe wood for people in this world?”

“No, children, there is no such refuge from taxes and recruitment. But if there were such groves and meadows of refuge—ah! thither indeed would peasants carry all their children.”

GRANDFATHER SAUL

My grandfather with his great crest of grey hair, which had not been cut for twenty years, and his enormous beard, was like a bear, especially when he came with bent body out of the forest, for the old man's back was bowed, and he frightened me when he walked into the low room; and I asked myself, "What will happen if he straightens himself? The bear will make a hole in the ceiling with his head." But old grandfather cannot straighten himself, for they say he has already reached his hundredth year. He lived in his own little room, and did not care to be with the family; they irritated and insulted him, and his own son called him a convict, a galley-slave. But grandfather Saul did not get angry, but would go to his own bright little room and read the church calendar, and cross himself; then he would suddenly exclaim gaily: "I am a convict, but not a slave." When they annoyed him too much he would make fools of them. "Look out," he would cry, "the matchmakers are coming!" The unmarried sister rushed to the window, and instead of the matchmakers there were beggars. He made a 20 copeck piece out of some tin buttons, and threw it on

the floor. My father-in-law was deceived; he took the false coin to the tavern, and came back not drunk—but beaten. The two men sat silent at supper—my father-in-law with a cut across his eyebrow, my grandfather with a broad smile like a rainbow on his face.

From spring till late autumn he gathered mushrooms and berries, and spread snares for the blackcock and gelinottes, but in winter he lay on the stove and muttered to himself. He had certain favourite expressions, and would use them again and again: “Perished, lost.” “Alas, you soldiers only fight with old men and women.” “Not to endure is destruction; to endure—is destruction.” “Alas for the fate of the Russian hero in his coarse grey cloth; he is flogged all his life, and when he thinks about death—he expects the pains of hell. Now our mind is made up. Come on, Korioga, come on.” Much more he said, but I forget. When my father-in-law scolded I would run to my grandfather, and we would lock ourselves in. While I worked my boy Dema sat on grandfather’s shoulder, fresh and ruddy like an apple on the top of an old apple-tree.

Once I asked the old man, “Dear, why do they call you a convict, and a galley-slave?”

"I *was* a convict."

"You, grandfather!"

"Yes, my child; I buried alive the German manager, Vogel."

"You must be joking, grandfather?"

"No, I am not joking—listen." And he then told me the whole story.

"In the days gone by we were serfs like other peasants, but we knew nothing of our master or of German managers. We had no forced labour; we paid no taxes except when we liked. About once in three years we would send some money."

"But how was that, grandfather?"

"Those were happy times indeed; not in vain says the proverb that the devil sought for our little corner three years and never found it. A thick wood and a quaking swamp surrounded it. No one could ride on horseback to us; no one could get to us on foot. Our landlord with his regiment, for he was a soldier, tried to come to us by following the tracks of wild animals, but had to turn back. No Government officials visited us in those days—ah! those were indeed good times! But now the master is close by, and the road as smooth as a tablecloth.

"Formerly only the bears disturbed us, and

we could easily deal with them. I myself with a knife and a pike looked more terrible than old Bruin. I trod the secret paths; I cried out, 'This is my forest.' Only once was I afraid; I stepped on a sleeping she-bear in the forest. Even then I did not show fear, I did not start off running, but I pierced her through with my pike; she was like a chicken on a spit—she just rolled over and over, and was dead in an hour. After that my spine creaked, and ached at times while I was young, and when I grew old my back got bent. Is it not true, Matrona dear, that I look like a wild beast?"

"Now, go on telling me, grandfather. What happened next? How did you live? Were you unhappy?"

"After a time our master, Shalashnikov, thought of another plan; the order came to us to appear. But we did not appear. We kept quiet, and did not stir out of our swamp; then came a great drought, the swamp dried up, and then the police came. What did we give them?—honey and fish! They came again, and threatened to send a troop of soldiers—we gave them the skins of wild beasts. But the third time we behaved in a different fashion. We put on old shoes

and torn hats and shabby coats, and went off in a party from Korioga. We appeared before Shalashnekov, who was in the chief town of the district with his regiment.

“‘Pay your taxes!’ he cried.

“‘We cannot pay taxes; the corn did not grow, the fish were not caught—we cannot pay taxes.’

“But he would not discuss the matter.

“‘Hi! bring the first batch’—and he began to flog us.

“The purse of Korioga is not easy to open, but the master was also stubborn. Our tongues were nearly paralysed, our brains were addled, and still he flogged, with no ordinary rods; they were fit for a giant. We had to give in at last, there was no help; we cried out, ‘Stop a minute, give us a chance.’ Then we ripped open our foot-rags, and gave the colonel half a capful of coins. His anger calmed down, and he treated us to such good, hot, herb-flavoured vodka, and drank with us himself, and clinked glasses with the subdued villagers of Korioga. ‘Well, a good thing that you gave in, otherwise I swear I had made up my mind to flay you all alive and let your skins cover a drum for the regiment. Ha, ha! what a good idea; that *would* have been a drum!’

“We went home with downcast looks, but two old rogues were laughing in their beards. Ah! you rogues, you are taking safely home your hundred rouble notes hidden in your armpits. They stuck so stoutly to being beggars that they got off cheaply. I thought to myself, ‘You old devils are all right, another time you shall not be able to mock at me.’ Then we swore in front of the church: ‘Henceforth we will not be put to shame; we will die under the rod.’

“Yes! our master bullied us thoroughly, but he did not get much profit out of it; the weak ones submitted, but the strong clung firmly to their property. I also bore up under it. I was silent, and I reflected: ‘However much you flay us, you son of a dog, you cannot drive out the spirit from all of us; something will be left.’ After Shalashnekov had dismissed us we stopped outside the city to count what money we had left. ‘You are a fool, Shalashnekov, you have not got it all’; and Korioga, in its turn, jeered at the master.

“We used to be proud folk, but now the manager and the master squeeze out our last penny. One fine summer’s day we were expecting news; it came at last, and announced that our master was dead, killed at Varna. We certainly did not grieve, but the thought

rose in our hearts: 'There is an end now to the prosperous peasant.' And so it was, for the heir contrived a means not hitherto employed. He sent us a German agent. Through the thick wood and the quaking marsh the rascal came alone, like a finger; he had a cap and a stick, but the stick was a fishing-rod. He began so quietly: 'Pay what you can'— 'We cannot pay.' 'Well, I will let the master know.' He sent word, and so the matter ended. He lived well, mostly on fish. He sat with his rod by the river, and the gnats bit him, now on the nose, now on the forehead. We jeered and cried, 'How do you like the gnats of Korioga, you German?' and he rolled on the shore and shouted in a harsh voice, as if he were on the sweating bench of the bath house. He made friends with the children and the young people; he wandered in the forest—not without design he wandered there. He said to us, 'If you cannot pay money you can work.' 'What work do you want done?' 'You can dig the ditches which are wanted in the marsh.' We dug them. 'Now cut down some trees.' We felled the trees all right, but the German pointed out where he wanted them cut down. We looked, and lo! a path had been made. When we had cleared a

path he ordered us to put planks down across the marsh. In a word, when the road was made we saw that the German had caught us in a snare. He travelled to the town with a pair of horses, the wretch, and behold he brought back boxes and mattresses; he also produced from somewhere a wife and children. He became intimate with the Judge and other officials, and the house was full of visitors.

“Now began a time of torture for the Koriogan peasant, who was utterly ruined. The agent flogged; the master had done that too, but the German did it harder.

“But, grandfather, how were you able to endure all this?”

“We endured because we were heroes. This is the heroism of Russia. Perhaps you think, Matrona, that the peasant cannot be a hero; his life is not spent in fighting; he is not fated to die in battle—but he is a hero. His wrists may be fettered with chains, iron may be forged to his legs, and cudgels from the thick wood may fall and be broken on his back. But his heart—the spirit of Elijah the prophet, thundering down in a fiery chariot, has filled it—the hero endures to the end. We may rot, but not be broken, not be overthrown—is he not a hero?”

“You are joking, grandfather; a hero like that would be eaten by mice.”

“I don’t know, Matrona, but while he bore up his load with a terrible effort he was dragged down to earth by the strain. Not tears, but blood, fell down his cheeks. I do not know, I cannot foretell what will be. But when winter snowstorms howled, when my old bones ached, I lay on the stove, I lay and pondered, and asked myself: ‘What has your strength done, what has it profited you? It has been spent in trifles, under the rod and scourge.’”

“But, grandfather, what became of the German?”

“Ah! well, the German lorded it over us for a while, but our axes were ready—only biding their time. We endured for eighteen years. The German had built a factory, and now he ordered us to dig a well. Nine of us dug till midday; we toiled hard, then we wanted our dinner, but the German came and said: ‘What! only so much done?’ and he began after his wont to lecture us in his slow way. We stood there hungry, while the German went on abusing us, pushing the wet earth into the pit with his foot; the pit was already a good depth. It happened that I pushed him slightly with my shoulder; then another pushed

him, then a third—we thronged and pressed round him; it was only two steps to the pit. We did not utter a word, nor look at each other, but the whole group pushed him cautiously to the edge of the pit and—he dropped suddenly in! He cried out, ‘A rope, a ladder.’ We answered him *with nine spades*.

“ ‘Come on!’—the word fell from my lips” (our Russian folk work all the harder when encouraged by a word). “ ‘Come on! come on!’ And they did come on with such a will that presently there was no pit to be seen—the ground was quite level. Then we looked at each other.” Here my grandfather paused.

“And what happened next?” I asked.

“What happened next? It was a bad job; we had first a drink, then came arrest, imprisonment in the town of B., and there I learnt to read and write until the trial came on. The sentence was—first a flogging, then penal servitude; but it was a poor flogging we got then. I ran away from the mines, but they caught me, and did not spare the rod that time. The masters in Siberia are famous for their floggings; they would flay a dog. I did not shrink from their whip, as Shalashnekov had flogged us even harder, for he knew how to flog, and made my skin as tough as leather, so that it would last for a hundred years.

“But life was not easy—twenty years of penal servitude and twenty years of exile. I saved up some money, and when by the Czar’s decree I could return home, I built this little room, and here I have lived a long time. While my money lasted grandfather was cherished and beloved, but now they spit in my face. Ah, you brave warriors! You only fight with old men and with women!”

Here ended Saul’s story.

The melancholy tone of the following poem reflects the helpless condition of a peasant in some remote corner of Russia; the field itself cries aloud and laments the wasted crop of grain:

THE UNREAPED FIELD

It is late autumn. The rooks have flown away,
The forest is stripped bare, the corn-land is
deserted.

Only one field is left unreaped.

It brings sad thoughts;

It seems as if the ears whispered to one another:

“We are weary of listening to the autumn
snowstorm,

We are weary of bowing down to the ground,
Full ears bathing in the dust.

Every night flocks of greedy migratory birds
despoil us.

The hare tramples us down, and the storm-
blast strikes us.

Where is our husbandman? Why does he yet
tarry?

Have we grown up less fruitful than others?

Have we not all blossomed and shot up into
ear?

No; we are not worse than others,

And long ago the grain in us swelled and
ripened.

Surely he did not till and sow for this,

That the autumn wind should scatter us."

The wind bears the mournful answer to them—

Your husbandman has no strength. He knew
why he ploughed and sowed.

But he has not begun the harvest work

Because it is beyond his strength.

The poor labourer is ill, he neither eats nor
drinks;

A worm sucks at his diseased heart;

His hands which guided the plough in these
furrows

Are dry like a shaving,

They have drooped like the lash of a whip;

His eyes are dim, his voice is low,

The voice which of yore sung a plaintive song,
As, leaning his hand on the plough,
The musing peasant went through his land.

THE GRANDFATHER

I

SASHA was in his father's study one day, and saw the portrait of a young general.

"Who is that?" asked Sasha.

"That is your grandfather," said his father, and bent his head and turned away.

"Why do I never see him?" asked the boy.

His father answered not a word. But the boy, standing before his grandfather's portrait, examined it closely, and asked: "Papa, why do you sigh? Say, is he dead or is he alive?"

"When you grow older, Sasha, you will know."

"Will you tell me by and by?" said the boy. "Mind you tell me!"

II

"Mamma, do you know grandfather?"

"Yes, my boy; I know him."

Sasha dragged his mother in front of the portrait; she came unwillingly.

"Tell me about him, mamma. Is it because he was not a good man that I never see him? Please, darling, tell me something about him."

"No, he was good and brave, but unfortunate." The mother hung down her head; she sighed heavily, she trembled, and began to sob.

Sasha looked keenly at his grandfather's portrait.

"Mamma, why do you cry? Won't you tell me?"

"When you grow older, Sasha, you will know. Let us go for a walk." . . .

III

There is a great stir in the house, the bright and joyous inmates are setting everything in order; papa and mamma whisper together, and how happy they seem. The boy is silent, but observes everything that goes on.

"You will soon see your grandfather," says his father.

Sasha's thoughts are full of his grandfather. He cannot sleep.

"What a long time he is coming," he cries.

"He has far to travel, my child," was the answer.

Sasha sighed and was puzzled.

But at last the mysterious grandfather arrived.

IV

The whole household ran to meet the long-expected old man . . . he stood sobbing while he blessed the house, the family, and the servants. He shook off the dust of travel on the threshold, and with solemn gesture drew from his neck the image of the crucified Saviour, and having crossed himself, exclaimed : " Now I am repaid for all I have suffered for so long." The son bowed down before his father and washed the old man's feet, and the mother of Sasha combed out the white locks of the grandfather ; she smoothed them, and kissed them, and called Sasha to kiss them too.

The grandfather put his right arm round the boy's mother while he smoothed with his left hand the hair of the ruddy Sasha, and cried : " What a fine boy."

But Sasha gazed steadily at his grandfather, and suddenly his tears fell fast like hail, and he threw himself on the old man and cried :

" Grandfather, where have you lived all these years ? And where are your epaulettes, and why are you not in uniform ? What are

you hiding on your feet, and is there a wound on your hand?"

"When you are older, Sasha, you will know. Now kiss your grandfather."

V

The whole house is redolent of joy; everyone is bright and gay. Sasha makes friends with his grandfather. They constantly walk out together; they explore the meadows, the woods; they pick cornflowers in the fields. Though grandfather is old in years, he is a fine vigorous old man, with good teeth and a firm gait, tall and of a noble demeanour. His soft locks are white and his beard like silver. When the boy looks at him, he seems just like an apostle speaking always in a gentle voice.

VI

They go forth to the sloping shore of the great river of Russia—the thieving woodcock whistles, a thousand birds are on the sands; hark the voice of the towing men as they haul their boat with a rope. There is a smooth plain stretching by the river; there are cornfields, meadows, woods. A soft coolness rises from the sluggish sleepy waters. . . . Grand-

father kisses the ground ; he weeps and chants in a low voice.

“Grandfather, why do your tears fall like hail?”

“When you grow older, Sasha, you will learn why ; but do not grieve, for I rejoice.”

VII

“I rejoice to see the picture dear to my eyes since childhood’s days ; look at the wide plain, and admire as I do ! There you see two or three country houses, twenty churches, and a hundred villages lying out there as on the palm of one’s hand. A herd is pasturing near the wood, but it is sad to see how lean the cattle are. A girl is singing, but how sad to hear the note of despair in her song ; it murmurs, ‘Give a helping hand quickly to the poor peasant.’ Do you not hear the anguish of a thousand years, Sasha, in her song ? Their sheep, their horses, ought to be thriving ; their cows should be fatter than merchants of Moscow. And their songs should be cheerful instead of melancholy and full of anguish. Should not these things be so ?”

“Yes, indeed, Grandfather.”

“Well then, do not forget this, my boy.”

VIII

In the luxuriant growth of the winter-sown corn every flower is glad. Grandfather praises nature, and observes the village children. He is always ready to talk with a peasant; they have long chats together, and then grandfather says, "You will soon be better off; you will be a free people." And he smiles so benignly that everyone is cheered by his smile, and shares his joy; their hearts leap up, and they cry, "What a saintly smile! what a captivating laugh!"

IX

"Freedom will soon be given to them," remarked the old man to his grandson—"that is all that the nation needs. I saw a marvel once, Sasha: a handful were exiled as rebels to a terrible desert; the land was given to them free. A year passed quietly by, then came Government officials; a village had already sprung up with threshing-floors, sheds, and barns! The hammer of a blacksmith resounded on his anvil, a mill was quickly being built; the peasants had already got provisions by trapping the wild creatures of the forest, and catching fish in the running river. The officials came again in a year, and there was a fresh marvel,

for the peasants were reaping corn from what had been barren soil. There were only the children and the dogs left at home—(all the rest were at work); geese cackled, and young porkers thrust their snouts into the trough.

X

“And thus in fifty years a large village grew up by the will and labour of men, which had created this great marvel. Everything flourished and was vigorous! How many pigs could you have counted, Sasha; and the ground was white with geese for half a mile in the outskirts. How much ploughed land there was, and what numerous herds. The inhabitants were a fine well-grown race, always vigorous; it was evident that they had money in their pockets. The husband kept his wife in ease, and on holidays she wore a smart cloak and a sable collar.

XI

“The children were brought up in comfort, and the horse went briskly to the factory, drawing a hundred *poods* in a solid iron-girt cart. For the horses were well fed, everyone there had plenty to eat, and the cottages were roofed with wooden tiles; you might see by this what the peasants could do. Brought up

in austere manners they created their own tribunal of justice; they contributed healthy recruits, they lived soberly and honestly, they paid their taxes in due season—only it would not do to disturb them.”

“And where is that village?”

“Far away; its name is Targabata, a terrible lonely spot by the sea of Baikal.

XII

“In the meanwhile look round, and what do you see? Here is a gloomy morose ploughman in bast shoes, and rags and shabby hat; his sorry jade in rotten harness can hardly drag his cart, for the beast is half starved. The ploughman, I swear, is always hungry too.

“‘Hi, stop and rest a bit, my good man, and I will do your work for you.’”

The scared peasant looked at the gentleman, and gave the plough to his hands. Grandfather guided the plough for a long time, wiping away the sweat from his brow; Sasha hurried after him and could scarcely overtake him.

“Grandfather, where did you learn to plough so well? You guide it as if you were indeed a farmer, and yet you were a general!”

“When you grow older, Sasha, you will learn how I became a labourer.

XIII

“The sight of the misery of the people is unbearable, my boy. It is the happiness of noble minds to see those around them enjoying comfort. The master holds his breath now in secret, having heard the word freedom. . . . But oh, what it was in our day! . . . Every peasant used to dread passing by the chateau, and would avoid it as if it were an abyss. I remember a terrible case of a wedding where the priest had hardly placed the rings on the fingers of the couple when unluckily the lord of the chateau came into the church to pray. ‘Stop,’ he cried, ‘who allowed you to marry this pair?’ He strode up to the priest; the marriage ceremony was stopped! A tyrant’s sport is cruel, you cannot trifle with a tyrant; he sent the bridegroom away as a recruit, and the bride to the maid’s workroom—poor Grusha. And no one dared to remonstrate! Who that had a soul could endure to see such things. Who?

XIV

“And this was not all; besides the landlord a horde of vile clerks squeezed the sap out of the nation, and if it was not a clerk it was the grinding official who went forth on his campaign to get profit. And who is the enemy

he attacks? The army, the treasury, and the people. There are the monopolies; each official guarantees another. The bold pillaged openly, the cowards snatched secretly. An impenetrable gloom, as of night, hung over the country. Everyone having eyes grieved for his fatherland. The groans of slaves are drowned by the whistle of the whip.

XV

“The sun does not always shine; fortune does not always favour us: every country must sooner or later reach a point when blind submission is of no avail, and the power of united efforts is necessary. Fatal disaster threatens—and suddenly the country is roused, and one heart and mind reigns throughout it. But you will not gain everything at once; nothing is created suddenly—a mere eloquent proclamation will not set the hearts of slaves on fire, you cannot all at once enlighten their rude and dark intelligence. We must have patience. An oppressed people is deaf to the general cry of misery. Woe to the distracted land, woe to the nation which is behindhand in the race. There was an army, but it was no safeguard; the army at that time was also crushed, and groaned under its own yoke.”

XVI

When grandfather met a soldier, he treated him to wine, greeted him like a brother, and chatted kindly with him. "A soldier's life is no longer a burden, the discipline now is mild. But how hard it was in our day; it was a wild beast, not an officer we had set over us. It was the custom then to dig a spur into a man's soul. Toil as you might, the officer always found fault: 'You march with too much effort; the pose is correct, but the breathing too obvious. Do you hear?—why do they breathe at all?'

XVII

"But when the officer is dissatisfied with the men on parade, he pours forth a flood of abuse, the knocked-out teeth of the soldiers scatter like hail, he rushes through the ranks, with foaming mouth he prances round the frightened regiment, the wolf grown furious seeks a victim. 'Dolts, fools, you shall rot in the guard-room.' He that had ears heard, and pondered on it in his mind. The abuse was worse than arrest, worse than the enemy's bullet. Who that had any self-respect left could bear such treatment?"

"Grandfather, you are thinking of some dreadful things. Tell me."

“When you grow older, Sasha, you will know. Always guard your self-respect.”

XVIII

Grandfather was silent, and his head hung down in sadness.

“Who knows, my dear, what did happen; let us go and rest,” he said. But rest did not content Grandfather for long; he could not live without occupation. He would dig in the garden till dinner-time or bind books. In the evening he would take a needle and work briskly at some rough sewing, and he lightened his labours by some long and melancholy song. His grandson would not lose a word, but sat beside him; the songs of Grandfather were a new riddle for the boy. For Grandfather sang of some glorious campaign and noble struggle; he sang of free nations and of an enslaved nation; he sang of desolate regions and of iron chains; he sang of beautiful women with caressing eyes; he sang how they withered away in this wild distant desert. He sang of the wondrous power of a loving woman’s heart. . . . He sang of the Troubetzky and Bolkonsky—he sighed—and he sang, and the melancholy of a Babylonian captive resounded in his song.

“Go on, Grandfather; but where did you learn your song? Let me hear it again, and I will learn to sing it to Mamma; you sometimes utter the same names in your sleep.”

“When you grow older, Sasha, you will know. I myself will tell you where I learnt my song, and where and with whom I sang it.”

“Well, I must get used to waiting,” said Sasha in a melancholy voice.

XIX

In summer the two friends often went out in a boat. With a loud cheery welcome Grandfather drew near the river.

“Hail, beautiful Volga! I have loved thee from childhood.”

“But where did you stay away so long?” asked Sasha timidly.

“I was far, far away.”

“But where?” asked the boy.

Grandfather seemed sunk in thought. Sasha gave a great sigh, for he expected the usual reply, and added:

“And did you have a pleasant life there?”

Grandfather looked at the child. “Better not ask about it, my darling,” he said; and he went on with trembling accents: “It was a wild, desolate, lonely, and interminable steppe.

It was hard, my boy—so hard! You wait a year for news—you watch your strength, God's best gift, wasting away—you dig graves for your kinsmen, and wait for the day when they will dig one for you . . . slowly, slowly the days drag on."

"Why then did *you* live there, Grandfather?"

"When you grow older, Sasha, you will know."

A tear fell from Sasha's eyes.

XX

"Good heavens! I am tired of being told, 'When you grow older.' Mamma says it, Papa pets me, but teases me too, and Grandfather also repeats 'When you grow older.' Well, see how much taller I have grown" (he jumped on the bench of the boat)—"better tell me now" (Grandfather kissed and caressed him). "Or are you all against me?" (Grandfather was agitated, his heart was fluttering like a pigeon.) "Grandfather, do you hear; I must know all now."

Grandfather kissing his grandson, whispered:

"You would not understand; you have much to learn first, my darling—wait a while and I will tell you all. You must prepare yourself

diligently, and learn to observe with keen eye. You are a good boy, Sasha, but you must study history and geography."

"Must I wait a long time, Grandfather?"

"It depends; perhaps a year or two," said his grandfather.

Sasha ran off to his mother. "Mamma," he cried loudly, "I want to learn at once."

XXI

Time passes. The boy studies his lessons diligently. He knows a good deal of history (he is ten years old now). He can quickly point out on the map St. Petersburg and Cheeta, and he can tell many a story from Russian history better than his elders. He hates wicked and stupid people, and wants to help the poor. He is mindful of what he sees and hears. Grandfather observes him and thinks; the time has come, but he himself is often ill, and begins to need a crutch. . . . Soon, very soon, Sasha will learn the sad truth.

GENERAL TOPTIGIN

It was a winter's evening and a sharp frost, when a young postboy was driving homeward on the highroad. He did not hurry, and the snow flew gently under the horses' feet, for though they were strong the road was rough, and there were ruts and ravines. On the way he overtook a man leading a bear. "Give us a lift, my good fellow," cried the man; "we shall go more gaily together." "What! You and the bear too?" "Never mind him, he is quite tame; take us both, and I'll treat you to a glass of vodka." "Well, get in then." Trephon put the bearded bear in and sat down himself. Thedza felt a little nervous. . . . At last they drew near a public-house, and Trephon asked Thedza to stop and have a glass. "Wait here a bit," he said to the bear, and they disappeared into the house. The bear was very tame, and he was old, so he sat still and just licked his paws and shook his chain. . . . An hour went by—they sat enjoying their drink; the horses were accustomed to wait quietly, no need to hurry.

It grew dusk, and the frost got harder as

night came on. The horses shivered ; the bear fidgeted in the sledge ; the horses gave a start : then, as ill-luck would have it, the bear growled, and off galloped the three horses as if they were crazy ! Thedza, hearing the sledge bells ringing, rushed out, but too late ; it was impossible to stop the horses—what a misfortune !

On, on they rushed, as if the devil was after them ; and no wonder, for every time they plunged into a deep rut the bear growled. There were shouts now and then from the folk around : “Clear the road ; it is the General Toptigin himself driving to his den !” The peasants trembled, the old women stood aside frightened, all scared by the growls of the shaggy driver, shaken in the ruts. But the more the bear growled the faster fled the horses, impelled by fear. They never stopped to rest till they had covered fifteen miles in a trice, and drove up wildly to the posthouse, with their traveller shaking his head and trying to get loose from his chain.

As the sledge stopped the postmaster himself came out briskly down the steps, and he saw booted legs and a bearskin coat. In the hurry and gloom he did not observe the chain ; he was indeed wondering where the postboy was, but he saw, as he thought, a gentleman—

he guessed he was a General—and he doffed his cap and asked politely: “Will your honour take a glass of vodka or tea?” and he offered to help him out of the sledge. At this moment the bear gave the loudest bearish growl he could, and the postmaster started back in a fright. “Good heavens!” he cried, “I have served faithfully and well for forty years, and many harsh Generals have I seen on the highway, for they don’t mince matters and they show their teeth, but this is an extraordinary General; such a one I never saw before. He must be quite a new-fashioned sort.” The stablemen ran up, and they too stared in surprise; there was something odd here, but they could not make out what. The news spread to the village; everyone was in excitement and crowded round. “A General is sitting in his sledge, and growling like a bear in his den.” Some were too frightened to go near, but one bolder than the rest, for the sake of a joke, pressed up to the sledge, and the postmaster ventured behind him, and at a safe distance cried: “Won’t your honour come into the house?” But at that moment the bear gave another loud growl, and the postmaster fled in dismay, and so did everyone else near him.

For two hours the angry General sat in the

sledge. At last the bear-leader and Thedza the postboy ran up. Trephon explained the matter to the folk, and with a cudgel drove the bearded General Toptigin out of the sledge. Thedza got a good scolding from the postmaster for taking such a passenger.

ETERNAL CALM

AMID the noise of capitals the orator wages his war of words, but yonder, in the remote depth of Russia, yonder is eternal calm.

Only the wind gives no rest to the tops of the roadside willows, and their countless boughs bend down low, kissing their mother earth.

POEMS OF LERMONTOV

POEMS OF LERMONTOV

THE GIFTS OF TEREK

THE Terek stream raves wildly down the gorge with boulders heaped. His wailing is like the storm wind. His foam like tears splashes around. But when he spreads out on the Steppe he is wily and changes his mood, and in a caressing voice he murmurs to the Caspian Sea: "Give room, Old Man of the Sea, give a resting place for my waves. Hitherto I have roamed at liberty, now it is fitting I should find repose. I was born in the mountain Kazbek, and nourished at the breast of clouds. I was ever ready to struggle with the alien power of man, and in sport I destroyed thy son, thy native Darial; and for glory's sake I rolled away many shoals of pebbles."

But leaning on the soft shore, the Caspian Sea remained unmoved as if asleep. And again Terek with caressing voice murmured in his ear: "I have brought thee a gift; no ordinary gift is this, but a Kabarden from the field

of battle, a bold warrior. He is clothed in a precious coat of mail, in steel elbowguards, and verses from the holy Koran are written on them in gold.

“His brows are scowling, and the festering blood on his lips has stained the noble stream. His glance is open but gives no answer; it is full of the old enmity. On the nape of his neck twines the cherished lock of raven hair.”

But leaning on the soft shore, the Caspian Sea is drowsy and silent. Then impetuous Terek is agitated and begins anew to persuade the Old Man of the Sea: “Listen, Grandfather, I have a priceless gift; what are all other gifts to this? But I concealed it from all the world until now. I bear on my waves to thee the body of a young Cossack girl with dusky shoulders and flaxen tresses. Her face is sad, but with a soft look as if she slept sweetly. There is a tiny wound on her breast, and the red blood flows in a stream out of it. And there is only one Cossack in the whole settlement by the river who does not grieve for this beautiful girl. He saddles his black horse and wanders in the mountains, till in a night attack he will lose his head by the dagger of an evil Chechen.”

The angry river was silent, and on his sur-

face floated a girl's face as white as snow, her tresses loosened by the stream. The Old Man of the Sea rose in splendour of power, strong as a thundercloud, and his dark blue eyes were moist with passion; he leapt up, and in the fullness of his joy he embraced the oncoming waves with a murmur of love.

THE DEBATE

ONCE on a time strife arose

Thus 'twixt two mighty peaks,
Kazbek and Shat, white with snow ;
Thus Shat to Kazbek speaks :

“ Brother, beware, men beguile,
Lest thou give to get nought,
For in clefts of deep defile
Smoky cabins are wrought.

“ There the sharp axes resound,
Copper and gold to wrest,
With iron shovels in ground
Man carves through thy breast.

“ Caravans laden go
Where erst was eagle's flight ;
Where the mist hung over snow,
Travellers now scale the height

“ Crafty are folk, then beware ;
Though the first step is hard,
They come from far unaware ;
Of the East be on thy guard.”

“What ! danger from East ? ” Kazbek cried,
 “No fear—they slumber too deep,
 Already nine hundred years glide
 While none can wake them from sleep.

“Where the planes their shadows spread,
 See the drowsy Georgian drinks
 Sweetest wines with foamy head,
 Then on broidered carpet sinks.

“On a flow’ry divan dozes
 Teheran by a pearly fount,
 In a garden crowned with roses,
 And the pipe’s sweet vapours¹ mount.

“Behold Jerusalem lying
 Here at our feet, not a stir,
 Judged by her God she is dying ;
 How shall I, Kazbek, fear *her* ?

“And there beyond, the yellow Nile
 Washes the golden stair
 That leads to royal tombs, the while
 Strange forms cast shadows there.

“The Bedouin no longer fights
 And rides as sheiks of yore ;
 His tents are gay, on starry nights
 He tells his ancient lore.

¹ Opium.

“See at my feet all slumbering lie,
All, they nor move nor hate,
This mouldering East; and this shall I
Fear lest it subjugate?”


“Boast not too soon,” Shat whispered; “hist!
Brother, look, listen, I hear
Footsteps come from the north in mist;”
Then vast Kazbek shuddered, fear

Crept in his heart, and a wonder,
He turned to the gloom of the north,
The veil of mist tore asunder
And showed a strange folk marching forth.

And a sound, a roar, comes over
From Ural to Danube stream,
And vast hosts his eyes discover,
And weapons sparkle and gleam.

Their waving plumes are white as grass,
Feather grass of the plain;
The motley Uhlans eager pass,
Guns follow in their train,

And standards fly, and drums resound,
The powder's flash starts bright,
As brazen guns leap on in bound,
With smoking wicks for fight.



The chief, grey-headed, leads the van,
With piercing, threatening eye,
On, on they march, man after man,
The countless hosts pass by.

As a loud torrent onward rolls,
Or thunder-clouds march forth,
Straight towards the East these warrior souls
Are streaming from the North.

Then Kazbek full of awe would fain
Count up the advancing lines,
Yet reckons on, and on, 'tis vain,
The hopeless task resigns.

He turns a mournful glance around
His brother peaks of snow,
His cloud-cap down he draws, no sound
He utters in his woe.



BELLS

BELLS

BELLS, my little bells,
Ye flowers of the steppe,
Why gaze at me
With your dark blue eyes?

What chime are you ringing
This happy May day,
Shaking your little heads
In the unmown grass?

My horse carries me on
Through the open plain,
Straight as an arrow he flies,
He treads you down,
He tramples you with his hoofs.

Bells, my little bells,
Ye flowers of the steppe,
Are you not cursing me
With your dark blue eyes?

Gladly would I leave you untrodden,
Gladly would I pass you by,
But no bridle can restrain
My steed in his untamed course.

I fly, I fly like an arrow,
I scatter the dust,
My brave horse carries me on,—
But whither—I know not.

COUNT ALEXIS TOLSTOY.

THE SONG OF THE CUDGEL

THE SONG OF THE CUDGEL

A FOLK SONG

MANY a song have I heard in my native land,
But not from joyous heart they sang,
But out of their grief.
And only one of their songs is engraved on my
memory,
This is a song of a guild of labourers.
“Heave ho! good cudgel, heave ho!
Crash through the forest green,
We heave and we pull and we strike, heave ho!”

This song is not made to sing within halls,
This is not the song to sing in the town,
The workmen made this song to sing
As they toiled and groaned at their task.
“Heave ho! good cudgel, heave ho!”

From grandsire to sire, from sire to son,
Through generations the song is handed on.
And in troublous times our peasant
Finds a sure refuge in this song.

“Heave ho! good cudgel, heave ho!”

An Englishman makes a machine,
And then another, to lighten labour,
But our peasant at his hard task
Wiolds his native cudgel with might.

“Heave ho ! good cudgel, heave ho !”

The dying father on the oaken bench
Leaves only this legacy to his son :
A blind obedience to his allotted hard fate,
And firm faith in his trusty cudgel.

“Heave ho ! good cudgel, heave ho !”

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